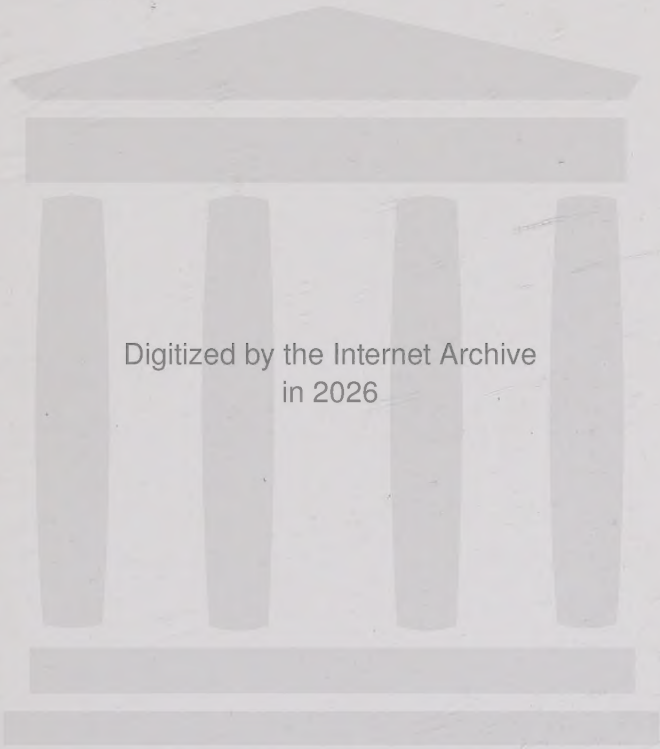
My Garden of Hearts

A New Book of Stories of Human Life, Love and Experience

Margaret E. Sangster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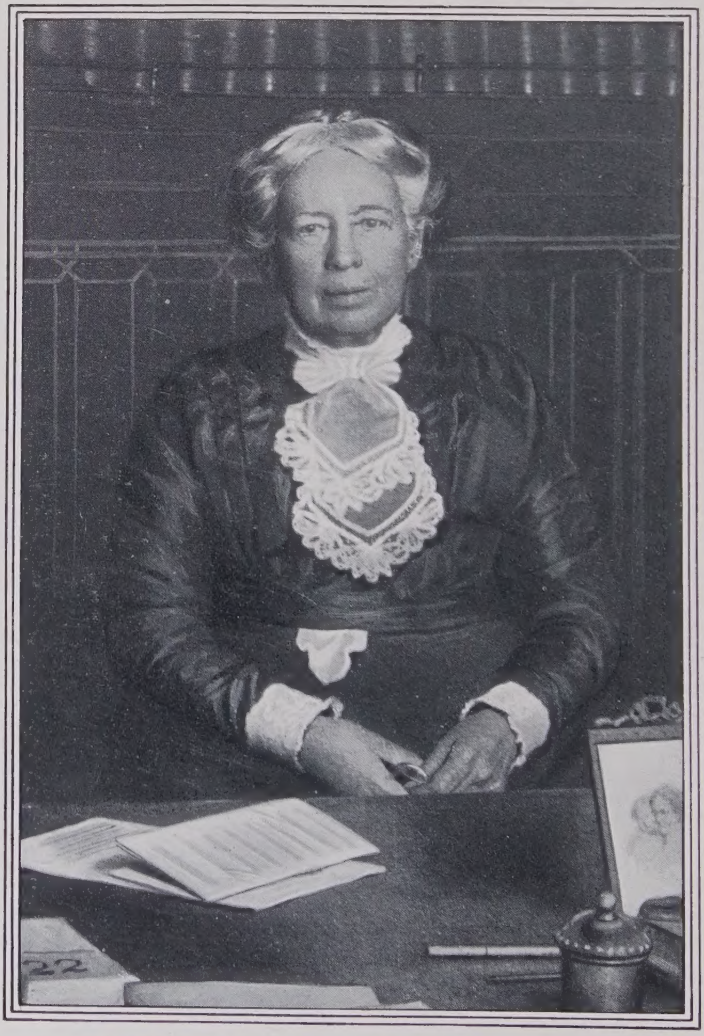

MARGARET E. SANGSTER

From a photograph taken before her last illness and never before published

MY
GARDEN OF HEARTS

By

MARGARET E. SANGSTER

A Collection of the Best Short Stories and Essays written during a long literary lifetime

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FOREWORD

As I Remember Her

Margaret E. Sangster—editor, authoress, verse writer—that is what it means to you, her public. But to me it brings memory pictures that are many and very dear.

I can see her now—a queen in a kingdom of loyal hearts—sitting in front of the flat-topped, mahogany desk, her slender white hand guiding a large pencil in an unerring line that her eyes were unable to see—eyes that looked dreamily into the distance, as if they saw the heavenly visions which she transferred to paper. And I can hear her voice, low, musical, and infinitely tender, as she turned her silver-crowned head in my direction, and said:

"Just a minute, dear. I have the most beautiful idea for a poem—"

Even as a tiny girl, I would sit quiet and watch her with wide, reverent eyes. For she was always my ideal.

I seem to see her, even now, among her guests, the gracious hostess; at her tea-table; in her garden among her dearly loved flowers, or in the maple-shaded streets, her tall figure erect and graceful. I can see her before a glowing log-fire, with a snowstorm outside turning the world into a fairyland. It was at such a time that she would stroke my hair softly, while she listened to my dreams, and hopes, and ambitions.

Perhaps this volume, in which the choicest of her short stories and essays have been gathered for the first time into book form, may bring back old days that are very dear to Christian Herald readers. I only hope that they may be half as sweet as my memories.

Margaret E. Sangster Jr.

New York,
October, 1913

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My Garden of Hearts

THE REVOLUTION OF MOLLY

"I TELL you, Molly, the house is well enough. It suits me. I have no money to throw away on fol-de-rols and foolishness; your mother never found fault with her home, and why should you? I won't hear another word."

"But, father," pleaded Molly, her dark eyes gathering a misty look, as if the tears were near, but her quivering mouth held firm by an effort of girlish will, "it is ten years since we lost dear mother, and nothing has been done to the house since she died. The paper is dingy and faded, the paint is worn off, the carpets are threadbare, the furniture is shabby. I am ashamed to ask my friends to the house. The home is not attractive for the boys. It wouldn't take so much to fix it up; but it now looks like poverty flat. I can't stand it, father."

"I guess you'll have to," answered John Petrie, with an obstinate set of his jaw. The bull-dog look came out on his massive Scotch-Irish face. "All you say, Molly Petrie," he went on, "is the merest stuff and nonsense. If you are so silly as to feel ashamed of a good home, don't ask your friends here. As for the boys, what's good enough for their father is good enough for them, or ought to be. If it isn't, they're an ungrateful pack, and I'll not have them indulged. What under the canopy you want, I can't see. There isn't a cellar in town as good as my cel-

lar: dry, clean, well ventilated, cemented, all in first-class condition, and the roof is perfect."

"We don't live in the cellar nor on the roof, father."

"Don't be pert, Miss, I'll not stand that. Go about your Saturday's work, and waste no more time; and, understand me, this subject is dismissed for this year. I'll not paint, nor paper, nor furnish new things to pamper folly and vanity in my children. That's settled."

Mr. Petrie put on his overcoat, jammed his hat on his bald head, and tramped off to the machine-shop of which he was proprietor. He was angry with Molly, angry enough to shake her; but you couldn't shake a young woman of twenty-three. For two months Molly had tormented him, renewing her efforts on every possible occasion, her heart being as resolutely set on making the shabby house and bare home presentable as his was in letting it severely alone. Now, he felt that he had arrived at the end of his patience. Was he, John Petrie, fifty-five years old, elder in the church, superintendent of the Sunday school, and leading citizen of H——, to be dictated to by his family, by a girl of Molly's age? Not he, forsooth, if he knew himself.

Mr. Petrie was prosperous. His bank account was satisfactory. His investments were shrewdly made and profitable. Furthermore, he was a good provider. His children were comfortably dressed and his table was generously spread. Only on two points was he miserly. He would not allow Molly to have hired help, not even with the washing and ironing, nor would he do anything towards furnishing and brightening a most ill-furnished and run-down-as-to-paper-and-paint house.

As he entered his office, his pastor rose to meet him, extending a cordial hand.

"Brother Petrie," he said, "I ventured to call that I might suggest some steps about raising money to introduce electric lights into the church. I know you will approve of the change. Our present lamps are so dim."

"I approve," said Mr. Petrie, at once bland and smiling, "of whatever will make our sanctuary beautiful. Put me down for a subscription of twenty dollars. I am always ready to put my hand in my pocket for the house of God."

The minister departed, beaming. He observed to his wife that day, that John Petrie was a most consecrated man, a vessel of sanctification, a true helper in the parish.

"Well," said Mrs. Minister, who was an observing little woman, "that may be, but I believe he does good that he may be advertised. I hold that man to be a sheet angel, Dan. He's harsh with his boys, and horrid to Molly. He'd better spend money on his own home, and let the church go."

"Ruth," the husband expostulated, "Ruth, my darling, restrain that tongue. It may get us into trouble."

"It never has yet, Dan, but to you I say what I think," rejoined the small, bright-eyed woman, with proper spirit. They had no children, and there was nobody to hear or repeat their confidences.

After her father left, Molly Petrie threw herself into a chair and had a good cry.

"Her Saturday's work!" For some unaccountable reason, she was extremely irritated at the phrase as it had fallen from her father's lips. When her mother had died, leaving her, a girl of thirteen, to care for the household and bring up her three younger brothers, a very heavy load had fallen upon her slender shoulders. She had then definitely left school—just as she was prepared to enter the high school. For five years, till Molly was eighteen, "a girl" had officiated in the kitchen; but she had then been dismissed, and Molly, without wages, had kept house unassisted.

"Monday's and Tuesday's and Wednesday's work, who does it all, if not I!" she exclaimed, talking aloud, so that Puss on the hearth heard, wondered, and came purring to her side, presently jumping up on her lap, a soft, furry friend, whose sympathy was a comfort.

Molly Petrie had a Scotch-Irish vein of stubbornness as well as her father. She did her Saturday's work thoroughly, cleaned the dingy house till it shone, baked bread and pies, prepared the baked beans, and the roast beef for the Sunday's meals. John Petrie and his sons came home for noonday dinner, and Molly presided over it with composure. It was a good and abundant meal. Mr. Petrie's crossness of the morning was laid aside, and he was disposed to be affable.

In his own secret soul, he was pleased that he had managed his daughter so successfully.

"Nothing like firmness and a tight rein with a woman," he said, as he strode downtown again, half-chuckling to himself. "She'd have the bit between her teeth in no time, if I were not firm."

When he came home to supper, the house was shining, but no Molly greeted him. The boys, returning home from work—big fellows all, who earned and paid their way—shouted her name, but there was no reply.

"Where can she be?" growled the father. "I won't have her gadding about."

"She's not given to gadding, father," answered John Junior, "and she's not a slave. Here, what's this?"

Just under the edge of Mr. Petrie's plate at the table was tucked a note. He read it with a puzzled frown.

DEAR FATHER: I have gone to town to spend a fortnight with Aunty Helen. She has been ill and needs me. As my return after that is a little uncertain, I have telegraphed to your cousin Ellen to come on Monday, and look after you and the boys. There is plenty for you all to eat, 'till Monday. Your affectionate daughter, MARY PETRIE.

Consternation reigned for a moment.

"How dared Molly go on a visit without leave?" stormed her father.

"Molly is of age," quietly declared John Junior, motioning his brothers to be silent. "It's hard," he added, "if she can never leave home for a day."

The meal was taken in glum silence. But the boys were on Molly's side, and they rejoiced in their tyrannical father's discomfiture. One by one they stole out softly after supper, leaving him alone. Not a man of them thought of washing the supper dishes.

Monday morning arrived, and with it Miss Ellen Petrie, a cousin several times removed, and a woman not in the least in awe of John. She took hold with a will, straightened up the house, and declared her intention of remaining as long as Molly wished to stay away.

"Sammy," she said to the youngest boy, on Tuesday, "who does the laundry work here?"

"Sister," he replied.

"I want to know! Well, you stop and send Mrs. McConnel here, quick as a wink."

Molly Petrie, at her Aunt Helen's, was in no hurry to go home. She had swiftly packed her trunk when she had decided to leave her father for awhile, and she had plenty of clothes to last her for a long visit. Her Aunt Helen, a younger sister of her mother, was only too glad to have Molly under her wing, and when Molly unfolded a bold plan, she abetted her.

"It isn't a love affair, dear, is it?" she asked, anxiously.

"It is not. I shall never, never be in love," averred Molly. "I intend to keep my independence."

"Till the right man appears," laughed cheery Aunt Helen. "My dear, my dear, I don't wonder at the way you feel. Your father has alienated you from any thought of love or marriage."

"Molly is young and pretty, and life is all before her," said Great-aunt Matilda. "She'll be all right if she does not meet a 'masterful man.'"

Molly's thought was this: She had worked so long without payment, and her father so ignored her wishes, and thwarted her at every turn, that she had concluded to try living where she could be paid for her services. With

her Aunt Helen's approval and aid, she secured a place as chambermaid and waitress in a summer hotel. Good wages were offered and accepted, and then Molly wrote frankly and fully to her father.

She explained that she could not submit to be treated as a dependent, or as an idiot; that in the home she claimed the right of a grown-up woman to freedom of movement as to her comings and goings, and that she also felt that she was within her rights in requesting either to be given an allowance, or paid a salary for her housekeeping service. She did not seek to return. The boys were now men; her father in his prime, and no one needed her. She needed herself—needed room to grow, to become an all-round woman. If she did come back, she must have an environment in which she could be contented.

John Petrie fumed and raged when he read this letter. He tossed it across the table to John Junior, who gravely commented on it, saying: "Good for Molly! She is very reasonable!"

Cousin Ellen, stepping briskly about the house, observed: "I'm thankful Mary has some Petrie grit. I was afraid, seeing how she let herself be imposed on, John, that she was all Kirkwood. But she's like us, and she'll get through!"

It ended, finally, in John Senior hauling down his colors and surrendering unconditionally. Six months later, Molly came home to a freshly papered and painted house—a house renovated and brightened and properly equipped, between the good roof and the dry cellar, upstairs, downstairs and in my lady's chamber. And the minister's wife, when she went to call, kissed Molly with tears in her eyes, though she never said a word; and when she reached home, flew to the study, and gave her wondering husband a good, big hug.

"John Petrie's had a change of heart!" she said.

MRS. ANTHONY

"YOU surely won't lend that woman your lace shawl, Dorothy!"

Dorothy Milburn was taking a folded shawl out of a box. The shawl had tissue-paper wrapped around it. A quaint perfume, something like sandal-wood, was diffused through the room, as she shook the soft folds out, and looked lovingly at the shawl, her most cherished article of dress.

"I don't want to lend it, Matty. I hate lending my things. They never seem so nice after somebody else has worn them. And Mrs. Anthony is so careless, and will let it trail in the dirt, and perhaps keep it a week, yet I've got to let her have it. I simply haven't the moral courage to deny her anything she wishes to borrow."

"Well, I would. She's hypnotized you. If I thought as much of my clothes as you do, I'd see a neighbor farther than next door before I'd let her go into society in my finery. She's spoiling the Egyptians for fair, Dorothy, and you are her chief victim."

Meanwhile, Dorothy, with a rueful glance at her lace shawl, folded it again, and carried it out on the porch, where a little girl was waiting.

"Here, Ellen, tell your Aunt Hannah she is welcome, but that I shall need this myself tomorrow, so please bring it back early."

"Yes'm," said the child, flitting down the garden walk. Next neighbors though the Milburns and the Anthonys were, there was a wide space of lawn and orchard and garden between them. It was in the Far South, and while winter was still holding the North in its icy grasp, Florida

was basking in the warm sunshine, mocking-birds were singing in the boughs, oranges were golden globes of luscious honey, while the blossoms on some of the trees scented the air with their heavenly perfume, and roses were blooming everywhere. The Milburns were strangers in the land, renting their cottage for a season. Mrs. Anthony owned the estate, and received a generous monthly rent for this house from her Northern tenants. Incidentally, she owned them, too, borrowing from their pantry and refrigerator whatever she needed for her table, and shamelessly annexing, under the guise of a loan, anything in Dorothy's wardrobe that suited her fancy. Small wares she did not trouble herself to return. Big things now and then came back, in more or less disorder and disrepair.

Mattie Deane was Dorothy's cousin from Vermont, paying her a month's visit. She was frankly aghast at the impositions to which Mrs. Milburn continually submitted, and could hardly persuade herself to be even civil to the persistent borrower when she called, as she frequently did, as ingenuous and innocent as any child.

Black lace shawls are at present used chiefly for flounces and drapery; but a few years ago they were worn with pride by many fastidious women. On a tall, graceful figure, over a delicate toilette, they were elegant additions to costume. A dumpy, bantam-sort of woman could not carry such a garment to advantage, and Mrs. Anthony was of that type, short, stout, puffing, panting, a little steam-tug of a woman, poor as a church mouse, and vain as a peacock. Fine feathers she must have, and she never minded at all if they happened to be borrowed plumes.

The lace shawl went into a boat that evening, and an end of it, falling over the side, was dipped in the water, and drenched.

"Hannah, you are ruining that pretty shawl of yours!" said a friend sitting opposite her. "It is half over the edge of the boat."

"Mighty glad you told me!" cried Mrs. Anthony. Her brother Jim, a gruff old fellow, who made *mal apropos* speeches from sheer bluntness and rough honesty, called out as he bent to the oars.

"Whose is it anyhow, Hannah? 'Tisn't yours, is it?"

The lady made no reply. She was annoyed that Jim "gave her away," as she phrased it, and vexed that she had injured the shawl by wetting it. Why had she worn the thing at all? A warm wrap would have been more to the purpose, for, though the day had been sultry, the night was growing chill. She shivered.

"Here, Nan," and her brother's voice was decisive, "take that cobweb off directly, and slip your arms into this peajacket. First thing you know you'll have a chill, and then a spell of break-bone fever. We can't afford that."

She took the jacket, folding up the shawl and laying it on her lap. She wished the hateful thing were safe where it belonged. Presently they were all talking and laughing again, and somebody had a mandolin and they sang. By the time they came back to the wharf, Mrs. Anthony had entirely forgotten Mrs. Milburn's shawl, and as she stepped to the landing, it slipped away unperceived and fell down, down, down, spreading out like seaweed at last at the bottom of the St. John's River. Mrs. Anthony never gave it a second thought. Until she reached home and was ready for bed, it did not come into her head. Then she began to wonder how she should explain the catastrophe to Dorothy Milburn. For it was an expensive article and its owner would be angry at its loss.

"But probably it's in the boat," she reflected, and resolved to see about it early in the morning. She slept the tranquil sleep of the just.

Breakfast time came. The Milburns had passed the fruit and the cereal stages, and were sipping coffee and eating rolls, when a messenger came from Mrs. Anthony.

"Please, Mrs. Milburn, Aunt Hannah says she hopes you found your shawl safe."

"No, dear. Did your aunt return it last evening?"

"She didn't say. She said she thought it couldn't get lost out on the veranda, under the blue sofa pillow."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Mattie, "that she is so wretchedly irresponsible as to return a valuable garment in that makeshift of a way? Under the blue sofa pillow indeed! It's good luck if it hasn't been stolen."

Word was sent that the shawl was missing. Mrs. Anthony returned a note of the deepest regret and apology, and refrained from borrowing anything for a week. Miss Mattie passed her on the street with a cold nod, but she looked so grieved and embarrassed that Dorothy's gentle heart was touched, and she stopped and consoled her.

"Never mind, Mrs. Anthony," said the unfortunate owner-of-pretty-things-that-were-lendable, "accidents will happen. Think no more about it." In her heart Dorothy knew that her pleasure in the shawl would never have been quite the same, once it had been trailed around by her neighbor. Its loss was the reward of her weakness.

A few days passed. Sunday morning came. Dorothy was dressing for church.

Mrs. Anthony's little niece appeared.

"Please, Mrs. Milburn, will you kindly lend Aunt Hannah your prayer-book?"

Dorothy frowned.

Mattie Deane laughed.

"Unless you are an absolute heathen, Dorothy, you cannot refuse the loan of a prayer-book."

"I loathe lending my devotional books."

"I loathe lending any books, but when it comes to a Bible or a prayer-book, I conquer my aversion. Here, let the little damsel take this to her relative."

She picked up a worn and dingy prayer-book and hymnal combined. But Dorothy flew to its rescue.

"Not that, Mattie, I use that every day myself, and it was once my dear mother's. Tell your aunty, my child, that I have no prayerbook that I can possibly lend her. I am sorry."

"You have a beautiful white prayer-book," said the child. "Aunty means that, I think."

"Tell your aunt what I say. I cannot lend her a prayer-book. One would suppose," she added to Mattie, "that she could use the book she found in the pew. A person should have Bibles and prayer-books of her own."

"But, dear Dorothy, your neighbor has nothing of her own, so far as I can see. The borrowing is endless, I wonder what she will want next."

The wonder was soon satisfied. In the twinkling of an eye, the little messenger came flying across the lawn, her dimples flashing, as she smilingly proffered a new request.

"Aunt is awfully sorry you haven't a prayer-book to oblige her with, but she'll forgive you if you'll accommodate her with a silk parasol and a little teeny-weeny bottle of violet essence."

The perfume and the parasol were despatched and Dorothy laughed as she set off to church, where she was sure of meeting Mrs. Anthony, as cool and unperturbed as if she had not carried the finer sunshade, while Dorothy was contented with the plainer one.

"Have you any paregoric?" was the question that evening, as the family sat on the veranda. "Aunty has a touch of colic."

Paregoric was of course at the lady's service.

A few days passed and Mrs. Milburn was anticipating guests, and thought she would make some peculiarly delicate cream puffs after a recipe that had been in use in her family for years. This recipe was written, and in a cook-book which Dorothy was very fond of, many of the formulas not being in print. When she looked for her book it was not to be found. On investigation, it transpired that

the maid, a former servant of Mrs. Anthony, had loaned her the book. Dorothy, indignant, went to reclaim it in person, stopping at the kitchen-door to direct Meliss to have everything ready for her baking on her return. The kitchen was in a building by itself across the yard.

"Miss Dorothy, I'm that flustrated, I don't know how to splain," said Meliss; "but fact is, Miss Hannah's done took away yo pie-board, and yo rollin'-pin, and yo flour, and yo sugar, and yo eggs. She hab friens comin' today, too."

Even a worm will turn; Dorothy rebelled. She had patiently, if not joyfully, endured the spoiling of her goods up to this point. Patience now ceased to be a virtue. With head up, and eyes lit with a steady purpose, she marched upon her pleasant enemy. She found her agreeably occupied in baking—the old New England cook-book on the table, the place redolent of delightful domesticity.

"Do, dear Mrs. Milburn," she exclaimed, "sit down and try my fresh cookies. Jean, bring Mrs. Milburn a fan and a glass of milk; I meant to finish with your things, dear, before you got round to them, but I've been hindered. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go straight back with you and help you out with those troublesome cream-puffs Meliss said you planned to make. That'll be a real neighborly act, on my part, as I've had to hurry so, and am right tired. Besides, it will leave Miss Matty free to give the last touches to your table. You know I have friends coming, too; but they'll be here later than yours, and I shall be so much obliged if you'll let Meliss make ice cream enough for both parties, while she is about it."

Dorothy picked up her cook-book. She felt faint. Her triumphant neighbor accompanied her home. After that morning, Dorothy surrendered. So long as she lived in Florida, she made no stand whatever against the incessant borrowing of the amiable Mrs. Hannah Anthony.

THE MINISTER'S WIFE

TEN years had slipped by as a tale that is told, since Jessie Muir had been married to Ralph Donald. They had made no change in her, except as the rosebud changes to the rose. She was a tall and slender woman, gracious and stately, at the acme of distinction, now that she had entered the sunny region of the thirties. Her head was crowned with red-gold hair, which she wore in a great coil; her brown eyes were steadfast and serene; her face had the tender calm of a Madonna.

The minister was his wife's senior by twenty years. A big man, with shoulders stooping a little from bending in his study over learned books, his pursuits had left their imprint on his fine, grave countenance. He was a courtly-mannered man of great personal dignity, and it was rather a trial to him to condescend to trivial things. Social calling and tea-drinking were not agreeable to him, but beside a sickbed, or in the house of mourning, he was a comfort and a tower of strength.

The parsonage was a sunny little house, gay with the patter of children's feet, and crowded with the happy cares that belong to that joyous period of married life when parents have their little ones growing up under their eyes and in their constant guardianship. Yet all was not happiness there at this time.

For some months Mrs. Donald had been aware of a smouldering trouble in the congregation. Doctor Donald was slower to perceive it. The marked absence of the young people from the mid-week meeting, the falling off in the attendance at the evening service on Sunday, and the tardy payment of the pastor's salary, were signs to have

warned a less preoccupied man, but he found every explanation for them rather than the right one—dissatisfaction with his ministry and desire for a change. The church felt unsettled and longed for another leader.

With her swifter intuitions, Jessie watched the brewing of the storm, but she said nothing to Ralph, there would be time enough when the clouds broke. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," was her motto.

"I wish, Ralph, dear," she observed one morning, as they were dressing, "that I could afford to buy cheaper clothes, mine are far too nice."

"I don't see why, Jessie," answered the husband, "your clothes suit you; and besides, as they really cost you and me nothing, they are much cheaper than stuffs you could buy. Mary's box will be here today, and you and the bairns are sure to find it packed with treasures."

"That's just the difficulty, darling. I and my children, thanks to our wealthy kindred, are better dressed than most of our people, and it awakens envy and jealousy. If I could explain, it might be all right, yet I fancy Deacon Barnard and Mr. Squires would be incensed, if they thought the minister's family were not dressed out of the salary. The salary is not paid, as it is, till we are everywhere in debt up to our eyes; and if they knew our affairs, they are quite capable of trying to cut it down."

Doctor Donald shook his head reprovingly.

"Ah! Jessie, Jessie! sweetest of women and wives, why have you not more charity?" he said.

The good man went to his study for the few moments of private devotion, which, with him, always begun a new day; and his wife hurried forward the dressing of the children. Breakfast brought them all around the table, and just as they had finished the meal, the expressman drove up with Aunt Mary's semi-annual box—a larger box than usual this time.

"Wait till after prayers, and then daddy will open it," said the mother to the eager flock.

The box contained an outfit for every one in the household, the minister included. Other things, too, there were in plenty—soft fine towels, exquisite table linen, and beautiful delicate lingerie and chiffons for the toilet of the mistress of the manse. She knew that love had been outpoured in every well-chosen gift, and that the tailor-made gown and the dainty house-dresses would fit to a nicety, for Mary and she were of a size and shape to wear one another's clothes, but—she knew, too, that critical looks would follow her down the aisle and into the minister's pew. She knew it!

However, what difference could it make. The fatal note of faint praise had been struck in the parish. People were saying, "Doctor Donald is a good preacher, but he doesn't win the young men," and "Doctor Donald is very profound, but he preaches over people's heads," etc., etc. Once a congregation listens to this voice of the siren, 'ware shoals. Reefs are perilously near.

The church in the next street, with a new minister fresh from the seminary, furnished a lot of new ideas about Biblical interpretation, and, endowed with a good stock of youthful magnetism, was filling up fast, and their church was being slowly depleted. A crowd in a neighboring sanctuary when one's own church is not full is a terrible strain on trustees and deacons.

Mrs. Donald, radiant as a lily in her gown of deepest wine-colored cloth, with her bonny group of children around her, sat in the minister's pew the next Sunday morning after the box had come from home, and heard her husband preach a sermon rich in spirituality and suggestiveness, from the text, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." She wondered how that sermon could fall on stony ground, for she knew that the man who was preaching had come to the pulpit from an hour of prayer. Yet she felt that it was missing its mark. Never mind. God required only of a steward that he should be found faithful. Success is not his part of the enterprise.

Monday morning early there was a knock at the parsonage door. Deacon Barnard and Doctor Strong called and had an interview with the pastor. They lost no time in unfolding their budget.

"We have ventured to bring to your notice," said Doctor Strong, "a rather delicate situation, Doctor Donald. Personally, we have no complaints to make, but there are some of the strongest members of our church who feel that the best interests of the congregation would be served by a change in our pulpit. We are very reluctant to say it, but the church is not prospering, Doctor Donald, under your ministry."

Doctor Donald's face flushed painfully, but he replied in a calm voice:

"We have had the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, and there have been many conversions. The benevolences of the church have not suffered."

Deacon Barnard, a man of coarse fibre, put in his word. "Some of us have had to dive into our pockets pretty often, or everything would have suffered, and you ought to know it. The income has fallen off. We are business men, and we expect to run our church on business principles. The minister must get the income, or he is a failure. A younger man, Doctor, with a less extravagant family, would suit this place better."

Doctor Donald rose. "You need say no more, gentlemen. My resignation shall be placed in your hands before the month expires."

When the visitors were gone, Jessie rushed in and threw her arms around her husband's neck.

"It is the darkest hour of my life," he said, looking at her with eyes that gave her a heartache.

"Dark hours often come before bright ones, dear."

"I am fifty-two years old. I suppose I have reached the dead-line. I am thrust out and my work is discounted. Well, I must support my family somehow. If not in the

ministry, I can be a day-laborer, Jessie. Thank God I am strong as a coal-heaver yet."

"You have always been a day-laborer, sweetheart," answered the wife cheerily. "Come, Ralph, let us leave this matter with the Lord, and then—it is a day of heaven's own glory, suppose we take the children and go on an excursion to the woods. We need fresh air and out-door freedom. We are not going under in this darkness, dear. We are going to await the Lord's leading."

Her face was divinely cheerful and fearless. For the instant the minister forgot the wound that he had felt, like a stab, when the deacon blurted out the clumsy truth, and, in a way, gave his pastor orders to pack up and leave. He forgot the thin pocket-book and the uncertain outlook. Here were two of them, with God, and what was there to worry about?

They made a day of it in the woods, and came home laden with golden-rod and asters and clematis and bitter-sweet. The minister walked as if he had thrown off a load. The minister's wife was more a queen than ever in her gracious bearing. As for the children, her trouble had not touched them, and they were bubbling over with fun and good spirits.

There were many who were grieved when the Donalds took their departure. Mildred Harrison, who was fading away with consumption, would miss her pastor and her pastor's wife. Old Mrs. Manson, who could not see to read, would be lost without the little visits from Mrs. Donald, that were so frequent and so welcome, and who else would spare an hour to read to her every Saturday afternoon? In many a household there was regret. But the ties that bound pastor and people were nevertheless soon severed.

"The future is all black," said Doctor Donald, after he had preached his farewell sermon. He and his wife were sitting in the study by themselves.

"No, my dear, the future is all bright and glowing. It is in our Father's keeping," said the wife.

She was right. The next morning's mail brought an invitation to Rev. Doctor Ralph Donald to become president of a college in the Middle West. The way was clear of obstacles, and the Lord's day-laborer went to the new post of service.

AUNT LIDDY

ALTHOUGH in these days electric cars are spinning everywhere and steel rails intersect all portions of most States, there are still rural neighborhoods where a daily stage is the usual conveyance for bringing passengers from the nearest railway terminal. Wood Haven, a tiny hamlet deep in the midst of forests, was quite six miles from Martin Centre, the nearest town. Until three years ago the Centre itself had been remote and rural, but at that time the railroad had been cut through and now times had changed and things were booming. Six miles out, however, the little cluster of homes, the blacksmith's shop, the grocery store, and the little church, remained as they had for almost a century. In that hamlet there were old people who freely declared that they never would trust their lives in a railway car, and only the young and eager souls in the place had the least longing to get away from it, and see what might be in the world outside. The stage was a sort of express wagon, too, and carried parcels from the Haven to the Centre, and only occasionally did it bring back a strange passenger. Regularly it started from the front of the grocery store at eight o'clock in the morning, and as regularly returned at four o'clock in the afternoon. If it brought passengers, it set them down at the respective cottages expecting them, if not, it stopped at the grocery store, to which people came for their parcels, when they casually paused for a bit of neighborly gossip or stopped to get the mail.

The Van Blarcom twins had finished their work for the day, and, as usual in the afternoon, were dressed in their second-best gowns, and each seated by a window were sew-

ing in a leisurely fashion. The twins were on the sunny side of sixty, but no one would have suspected it, for Time with them had been standing still since they had passed their fortieth landmark. Up to that date they had looked rather old for their age and ever since they had seemed to stand still, so that now they looked younger than the entry in the family Bible really warranted. They were not in the habit of receiving company, and both sisters started in surprise when the stage drew up at their door. Out stepped two persons, a little brisk old lady and a pretty girl of twelve. The former was dressed in a bygone fashion; she wore a rather large bonnet, and a long green barege veil floated behind her like a pennant; she carried a large bandbox, done up in a green muslin bag with drawing strings at the top; this in one hand. In the other she held a birdcage, shaded, that the inmate might not be frightened at the sights of the road. The child, who was very daintily dressed, and had long, yellow curls, was loaded with small bundles that filled her bare arms as she followed the old lady up the garden walk.

"Bring up my trunks as soon as you can, young man," said the old lady, addressing the driver. Then turning to the astonished twins, she said, "I reckon I've taken you some by surprise, Mary Anna and Gertrude; but I'm your Aunt Liddy from Boston way, and I've come six hundred miles with little Charlotte to stay with you the rest of my time. I had to make a bolt for it, didn't I, Charlotte? And I wan't going to leave you behind either. I knew you girls had a big house and plenty of room and that you needed somebody to stir you up, and when Rebecca Parsons decided that the Old Ladies' Home would be the best place for me and the asylum the right place for Charlotte, we took the next train. I have always kept a little money for an emergency, and I had enough to pay our expenses here. Maybe I've got more and maybe not. But, anyway, here I am."

This was so long a speech that the twins had time to adjust their emotions; they each kissed Aunt Liddy and the child, and Mary Anna, who spoke for both, said, "Of course, Aunt Liddy, you did right to come straight to us. What could Rebecca have been thinking of to want to put one of our kin in an Old Ladies' Home? I never heard of such a thing. But, pray, who is this dear little girl?"

"A friend of mine," answered Aunt Liddy, and said no more.

The twins led the way up a short flight of stairs to a great west room in which were two beds; one was in the center of the room, the other in a corner. Both were made up with fresh sheets and pillow cases, and there were two dressing bureaus, two easy chairs and two tall wardrobes. Flowers stood on the bureau nearest the large bed. White curtains, that looked as if they had been very lately laundered, hung at the windows. "Why," said Aunt Liddy, drawing a deep breath, "why, girls, this room looks as if you had just fixed it up for company. I never saw the like!"

"Yes," said Gertrude, "for some days sister and I have had a feeling that somebody was coming. We didn't know who it might be, but we both knew in our hearts that we were going to have visitors. We couldn't have anybody nicer than our dear mother's Aunt Liddy, and we are very glad you have come and glad to have the little girl with you. Make yourselves at home. This west chamber was mother's room long ago. She always had two beds in it."

By this time the stage-driver had arrived with two trunks, a large and a small one. These he brought upstairs and deposited in the west room. In the sitting-room the sisters, very much excited, were holding a council. They had a small, fixed income; enough for their own wants, but hardly enough for the permanent entertainment of two other persons, one of them a growing girl. "It was queer," said Gertrude, "that Aunt Liddy didn't write, queer that she

should want a little girl like this Charlotte. The child's dress does not indicate poverty. I wish we could find out why Aunt Liddy brought her. If her people don't know where she is, they'll be frightened half to death."

"Well, sister," said Mary Anna, "as father used to say, 'We must wait developments.' Don't bother them with questions, and, above all things, don't let the neighbors know anything about our affairs. Now we must get supper."

In a few days it seemed as if the old house had always sheltered the newcomers. School opened, and Charlotte Lindsay was duly sent in to take her place in one of the classes. Aunt Liddy explained that Charlotte was an orphan, and that she had no near relatives. She had been living since her babyhood with an elderly lady in Aunt Liddy's town. This lady had provided for her generously, but on her sudden death, relatives who had inherited her property, wanted nothing to do with the child, and had been thinking of putting her in an institution. Aunt Liddy had taken her into her own home. Then followed a disaster to Aunt Liddy's fortunes. She said she had lost money through a nephew whom she had helped. She was sure he would make it up after a while, but he had grown discouraged and gone away and nobody knew where he was. When Rebecca Parsons, who was the manager-in-chief of everybody's business, had gone about with a subscription paper to raise funds that she might have a room for the rest of her days in the Old Ladies' Home, Aunt Liddy had run away.

"What did you do with the house and the furniture?" asked one of the twins.

"Left them there. Turned the key in the door. Made my will; in case of my death they will belong to you. You girls are the nearest to me in the wide world, even nearer than John."

When women are approaching sixty, with hearts as young as ever they were, it pleases them very much to

have somebody twenty years older speaking of them and to them as if they were girls. The addition to the family meant a little self-denial, and a little more economy than they had hitherto practiced. It had been their custom to purchase new gowns and hats every autumn. This season they furbished up their old ones, and sent no order to New York for anything new. They cut down expenses in many little ways but did not abridge their donations to the church or the missionary society. As winter came on, Aunt Liddy kept closely by the fire; she was of an active temperament, but she was beyond eighty, and a little feeble. Charlotte waited on her with the most loving affection. After a while the twins wondered how they had ever gotten along without the company of the dear old lady and the helpful child. Charlotte brought a breezy life from school into the home, day by day. Aunt Liddy's bird filled the house with music. The only shadow was that Aunt Liddy herself seemed to pine away. She ate very little, and grew constantly thinner. She would gaze from the window with a far-away look, as if she longed for something or somebody, and before very long the twins sent for the doctor. "Nothing is the matter," he said, "except old age. Cold weather is trying to old people. Make your aunt as comfortable as you can, and if there is anything she wants try to get it for her if possible."

They were all sitting together one day when Charlotte, returning from school, brought the mail. There was a letter for Aunt Liddy, addressed in a strong, manly hand. "From John," she said. She trembled a little as she opened it. The next instant she uttered an exclamation of delight. "Oh, girls," she said, "this letter is from John. He has gotten all my money back and his own, and he will be here some day next week to see us all. Oh, I wish he were coming today."

The letter proved the best medicine. Aunt Liddy plucked up her spirits and began to seem her old self again.

The twins were a good deal flustered at the idea of entertaining a man under their roof, but they arranged their other guest chamber and awaited his coming. When he arrived he brought good fortune. He had been to the Klondike, and was one of those to whom a tide of gold had flowed at the right moment. He insisted on adopting Charlotte as his own particular care, and told the twins that he would pay them for her support until she should be twenty-one. "You are not to have a particle of anxiety on her account," he said, and he named a sum to be paid quarterly that, to the twins, appeared munificent. He stayed only a few days, but when he left, the house had taken on a new brightness. Aunt Liddy lived several years and passed away quietly one September morning. When she was gone and her will was read, it was a surprise to the sisters as to many others, to find that she had never been, in any sense, a poor woman. She left her little home, all her old furniture, and a goodly sum in the savings bank, to her nieces, Mary Anna and Gertrude.

When Rebecca Parsons heard of it, something like a blush rose to her sallow face. "How foolish I was," she said, "and how impertinent Miss Liddy must have thought me! All that might as well as not have been left to our church, if I had only minded my own business."

THE REJUVENATION OF MOTHER

"YOUR mother is looking very tired, have you noticed it, Cynthia?"

Cynthia Watson glanced up absently from her work. She was finishing a gown that she meant to wear at her cousin Mary's wedding a fortnight hence. The material was radium silk, of a primrose shade, and Cynthia was daintily finishing it with knots of embroidery and trimmings of beautiful lace. The lace had been her mother's, who had worn it on her own gowns in the days when she had not forgotten to care about her looks. For several years Mrs. Watson had seemed to lose interest in dress and ornament and to be quite satisfied with the domestic drudgery in which her middle life was passing away.

Her daughters, Theresa and Cynthia, had a habit of taking their mother for granted. She was to them one of the visible facts of the universe, like the sun or the moon, that went on forever doing its work and making no particular impression beyond the familiar feeling of heat or light. Undoubtedly both girls loved their mother and would have been grieved wilfully to pain her, but insensibly they had fallen into a habit of omitting her from their calculations.

She never went anywhere; she seldom had a day of rest, as even the Sabbath brought her additional labor in preparing a better dinner than was customary during the week, and she infrequently bought herself anything new. Several times lately, when Cynthia and Theresa had appeared in a new outfit, their mother had taken their old costumes, freshened them up after a fashion, and worn them herself. She was forty-eight, but a casual observer would have supposed her to be sixty at least. As for the girls,

they never gave her a thought, so far as sentiment was concerned. She was mother. That told the whole story.

A certain Aunt Katherine, who was really not a kinswoman, but simply an old schoolmate and intimate youthful friend of Mrs. Watson, had been spending a few months in a neighboring State, and had crossed three counties to make her old chum a visit. There had been consternation in Mrs. Watson's mind when she received Katherine Anderson's letter announcing her coming, but it reached her too late for a postponement of the visit.

In her own room, standing before her looking-glass, Mrs. Watson had observed with a sinking heart, and almost for the first time, how much she had aged The mirror revealed a sharp face, hollow cheeks, thinning hair, and a general all-pervading appearance of exhaustion and discouragement. Yet Mrs. Watson recognized the truth, that the weariness and discouragement which had grown chronic, had not as yet robbed her of vitality nor taken away very much from her physical resources.

"I am wiry," she said to herself. "I can stand a good deal. I am stronger than the girls. I have had my day. It is only fair that they should have theirs."

The girls had been taught to think of their mother's friend as Aunt Katherine, and they had a half-formed conception of her as their mother's contemporary. When Joshua Holder's cab brought her from the station, they were surprised to see a gray-haired lady, straight as a pine, with a fine, alert bearing, bright eyes, a beautiful complexion, and a dress and bonnet in the latest mode, stepping from it and walking briskly up the little path. She did not seem a day beyond thirty-five. She was fifty, two years their mother's senior.

A week had elapsed since Miss Anderson's arrival, and she had taken many quiet notes, mentally, of the way in which things were going. She saw her friend's husband, a man in his prime, well-to-do and able to give his wife an

easier life. She saw the two young daughters, selfish, not because they were heartless, but because they were thoughtless and had been used to standing in the foreground and getting the best they could, irrespective of their mother's rights. She resolved that there should be a change.

On three or four occasions she made tentative remarks about Mrs. Watson's altered looks; but she might as well have said, "the wind is in the north," or, "the clouds are full of snow." The girls were not impressed. So, being a person who did not mince matters, she put into practice another plan. She took her host aside. He, too, was an old friend and schoolfellow. She said, bluntly, "John Watson, when you married Clara Hope, I thought you were in love with her. I see that I was mistaken."

"Why do you talk so foolishly, Kate? I was in love with her, and I am still. She is the only woman in the world for me."

"She used to be very pretty," said Miss Anderson, reflectively. "It's a pity she's gone off so. She's grown frightfully plain."

John Watson flushed. "You have no right to speak so of her," he said. "To me Clara is as pretty as she ever was."

"Clara," answered Miss Anderson, "is walking as straight to her grave or else to the insane asylum, as I ever saw a woman walk. She has lost her ambition and her beauty, and her interest in the world. She is spending her strength for three abominably heartless people, yourself and her two daughters. You can afford to hire a housekeeper. You cannot well afford to lose your wife."

Mr. Watson was decidedly angry. He left the room and shut the door behind him. But at supper he looked at his wife and he looked at Katherine Anderson, and he made comparisons. Next morning he sought Miss Anderson with a request.

"Will you persuade my wife to go home with you and

stay two months? I want to see what a good rest in her old home will do for her."

"I can and will," replied Miss Anderson, "on one condition. You must give me a liberal check, so that I can stop in New York long enough to fit Mrs. John Watson out with suitable clothes before she appears among her old friends and schoolmates."

The girls were almost stunned when they found that mother was really going to leave them for eight weeks. They were privately not a little ashamed at the meagerness of her wardrobe, when it came to packing her trunk. As for Mrs. Watson, she was like a chip in a torrent before the energy of her old friend. She seemed to herself a woman in a dream, and could hardly believe it true when, at the station, she kissed her husband and the girls good-by.

Miss Anderson let her alone on the journey. When they reached New York, they went to a quiet hotel where they spent a week. During that time dressmakers and milliners and tailors and shoemakers effected a transformation in Mrs. Watson's external woman that no one could have looked for. The woman within her awakened and cast off some of the burdening years. It is marvelous how much can be done in a very short time, when one has a friend at hand who sees that one sleeps and eats and rests, who takes one for drives, and shows one interesting things that one has heard of, but never expected to see, and who takes pains to make one presentable, instead of a dowdy.

When the two old friends set out for Maple Corners, Mrs. Watson no longer looked much over fifty. She had a love letter from her husband every day. Mr. Watson had been piqued at the spinster's tart comments on his conduct, and was, besides, determined to leave no stone unturned to make his wife's journey away from home a great success. Whenever Cynthia and Theresa ventured to complain of any hardship that they found in their lot in their mother's absence, their father promptly changed the subject. One day he said:

"When mother comes home again, you girls are to take the heavier end. You may have all the help you want, but your mother is not to be sacrificed as she has been. She is two years younger than Miss Anderson, and much handsomer; and I mean that folks shall know it."

In her old home, Mrs. Watson entered into the pleasures and gayeties of a very social season with an impulse and vivacity that she had supposed long since impossible to her. She went to church and to sewing society, and met her old schoolmates and their girls, and when invited to a luncheon in her honor, given by the Corner's Club, she actually made a little after-dinner speech.

By and by the time came for her return. It was not the same mother who had gone away, tired, a drudge, careless of her looks and willing to stay at home while others went out and enjoyed themselves, who stepped from Joshua Holder's surrey. She came running up the path like a girl, her husband who had gone thirty miles up the road to meet her, proudly following her with bags and satchels; her cheeks had rounded, her hair was prettily arranged, her eyes were bright and she had been to the dentist. Her mouth, that had been the feature most evidently showing signs of age, was improved, and the girls, looking at each other, said, "Why did we never notice that mother needed a little dentistry?"

"Well, Theresa," exclaimed Cynthia, "we were so busy with ourselves that we never thought of mother."

As the weeks wore on, mother showed an evident intention of staying in the new grooves and avoiding the old ones. Her rejuvenation was complete. She was the same loving mother, a little disposed to be anxious, a little too self-denying, but had learned that she owed duties to herself, and that she could do better for her dear ones by taking care to be at her best than by neglecting her own rights and yielding her own privileges. She took a new place in her home, and instead of being its chief servant, she became its mistress and chief ornament.

A CHERRY PIE

"SPRING lamb, green peas, and cherry pie! That's a dinner fit for a king. Don't you think we might ask the minister to come in after church, and invite Reuben's folks to spend the day?"

Deacon Otis was standing in the kitchen door. His wife was bustling about intent on her household affairs. She was a little black-eyed woman, alert and quick, rather bird-like in her motions, a snap in her crisp accents.

"Reub's folks, of course, Leander," she said. "They always lot on eatin' Fourth of July dinner here. About Mr. Wasson, I dunno! It depends on Mamie. She may not want to seem so particular."

"Here she comes! I'll ascertain her views," said the deacon, turning ponderously round.

"Mary Otis, have you any decided objection to my having the pastor here for dinner next Thursday? It'll be Independence Day, you know."

"Now, Mame," her mother put in, "you speak your mind. I calculate to have a good dinner, and I'd as lief as not entertain Mr. Wasson and have it over with. But you've been holding off from so much as lookin' at the minister lately. You've been downright unmannerly. And if you don't want him, just say so."

"Why, mother!" Mary blushed and dimpled. Her hands were full of roses. She resembled a rose herself. "Why, mother! Why, father! What a fuss about nothing. I'd be delighted to have Mr. Wasson, if you want him. I've not been thinking of him one way or the other. I'd like to have David Treat asked, too."

At the mention of David Treat's name Deacon Otis

frowned. His face grew black. Mrs. Otis shook a warning finger at Mary. But the petted daughter would not be hushed.

"I think just as much of David Treat as I do of David Wasson, there! And I'll marry the one that asks me first. Mother, you'd better let the boys gather the cherries, if you want cherry pie day after tomorrow."

Singing like a thrush, Mary flitted away to her own chamber, where she was heard moving about with her light step, just as though she had not discharged a bomb-shell on the floor below.

"If she were ten instead of twenty, I'd give her a scolding she'd remember," said Mrs. Otis, angrily.

"I've a mind, as it is," replied the deacon, "to turn the key on her and lock her in her room till she comes to her senses. David Treat, indeed! The saucy jade!"

Deacon Otis was one of the slow-tempered men who take long to kindle to wrath, and who are long in cooling. As his wife saw the deepening wrath in his grim countenance, she deemed it prudent to restrain the light flame of her own anger. She was really more exasperated at Mamie's attitude to her father than at her affront to the minister, whose marked attentions to their child were flattering to both parents. There was nothing personally against David Treat. But the Treats and the Otises were ancient enemies, and from father to son had descended a feud over a disputed boundary-line. A certain cherry tree growing in the south orchard was claimed by both families, and there was an annual strife as to which should possess its rich yield of shining fruit. Until the present generation coming along had shown a singular tendency to friendliness, the stubborn farmers had taken a strange satisfaction in their inherited ill-feeling. But David and Mary had been fellow-students in a co-educational college, and had established amicable relations there, which they seemed resolved to maintain, notwithstanding the opposition of the elders on both sides.

To complicate affairs, the Reverend David Wasson had been unusually impressed by the winsome charm in Mary Otis, and had shown in numberless small ways his wish to be more to her than a mere acquaintance. He was a fine, presentable man of thirty, with some private means, and, to Mr. and Mrs. Otis, it was most irritating that their daughter should refuse so good a match. Yet this could be borne with patience, if it were not for their well-grounded suspicion that her heart was already given to David Treat.

"Husband," said Mrs. Otis, soothingly, "there's no wit in our going on so over Mary's moods. She's our only child, and you know and I know that she'll mate with nobody but the man she chooses You heard her declaration of independence just now!"

"So did you!"

"Yes, and it pleases me no more than it pleases you. We've spoiled that child, dear, between us."

"Well, I do hope Mr. Wasson'll have the gumption to ask her first!"

"We must give him every chance. David Treat shan't break bread at our table, any way."

"No, indeed. Not he."

The hours slipped by very swiftly. Came the morning of the Fourth. In that quiet rural community, where there was no village to speak of, nothing except the church and the postoffice and the one country store at the center, and farms stretching away in long green lines across the undulating hills and vales, the Fourth brought stir and splendor all its own. Garlands of flowers enwreathed the portico of the church, intertwined with strips of red, white and blue bunting. The flag streamed from the church roof, and from the store and postoffice. Drums beat early in the morning, and a few old men, the remnant of a gallant company who years and years ago, young and brave, had marched to the Civil War, wearing their uniforms and their G.A.R. buttons and badges, met in the little square before the dew had dried.

Later there was an assemblage of the Sunday school, and the church was opened for patriotic songs and addresses. The distant muffled thunder of cannon was heard at intervals, and every small boy in the neighborhood had his own store of crackers and torpedoes. The day was like no other in the whole round year.

Duly invited, the minister and Reuben's folks came to dine at Deacon Otis' hospitable board. A fine dinner it was, well cooked, well served and abundant. Mary Otis, in her white frock, with her red-gold curls rippling and waving over her head, her brown eyes dancing, her dimples flashing, was quite beautiful enough to turn the head of any bachelor so fortunate as to be near her. She was a radiant vision of delight. Her parents had overcome their momentary anger with her, anger towards their idol was generally transient, and all was serene. Reuben's motherly spouse, whose children were as yet in the kindergarten and primary sphere of existence, was as proud of her niece as if she had been her daughter. Mr. Wasson was the guest of honor. David Treat was certainly nowhere to be seen.

Dinner progressed famously from asparagus soup to cherry pie, with the courses between as appetizing as ever courses could be. The minister did full justice to the delicious fare.

When the last of Mr. Wasson's bright stories had been told, and the two older men had finished their often-repeated reminiscences of other Fourths, and the cherry pie had been eaten to the last crumb, there remained of the solemn rite only the final duty of washing the dishes. The matrons took this upon themselves. Deacon Otis and Uncle Reub lit the pipes of peace and sat down in the porch to smoke. The minister disapproved of smoking, but condoned it in men so old as his host and his host's brother. He invited Mary to walk with him down the garden and toward the brook, and she consented. A nameless air of homage pervaded the young man as he strolled beside the maiden. His

mind was made up. He meant, down by the brookside, under a branching elm, to ask her to marry him. On her part, divining the tokens of his decisions, she was striving to fend off the honor. She did not want to reject him and inflict a pang of mortification where she really wished to be kind. Moreover, she was a girl of literal truthfulness, and she had declared she would say yes to the one of the two Davids who should first propose to her.

They sauntered slowly across the level pasture land, through the south orchard, past the fateful cherry tree. At the instant of passing it, Susie Treat, David's youngest sister, came flying out as if from an ambuscade, and presented Mary with a cherry pie and a silver knife.

"Brother says cut the pie the minute you get it, Mame!" exclaimed the breathless little messenger.

"A most inopportune gift!" began the minister. But Mary did not heed him. The silver knife was in her hand. She slipped it under the flaking crust, that covered a ruby store of uncooked cherries and a note from her lover.

"Sweetheart, my sweetheart," it ran, "you are mine and only mine. Will you marry me? Oh, Mary Otis, do not refuse; do not let anyone persuade you to make me wretched for life. Mary, if you will be my wife, send back this pie."

With great presence of mind, Mary called Susie.

"Here, dear, carry this pie back to Dave, and tell him I'll expect him over this evening."

So ended the feud of the Treats and the Otises, and the Reverend Mr. Wasson found another mate.

AT LONESOME FORD

MISS CHARLOTTE PERKINS, with a young companion, lived in a large house on a fine avenue, lined with mansions similar to her own, and surrounded by fair gardens, which in April were ablaze with tulips and jonquils. The town was a thriving place in the Middle West, and society there was cultured and refined, with a somewhat exclusive inner circle to which Miss Perkins belonged. She was of aristocratic traditions, and possessed inherited wealth, having, in fact, more money than she could spend, and often finding time heavy on her hands for lack of something interesting to do. Most springs saw the Perkins' home closed, except for a room or two, left in charge of a caretaker, while the owner was abroad in Athens or Nice, or on the Nile, or else enjoying the lavish bloom of California, or loitering in the orange groves of Florida. This year Miss Perkins, in weariness of body and surfeit of travel, had remained at home, and the daughter of an old school-mate was keeping her company. Lulu Bond had known nothing of luxury until she came to D——, and had been installed in her position as companion and secretary, with a generous salary, in this home of elegant ease. Her father was a home missionary at Lonesome Ford, in a frontier mining community, and his annual stipend was less than the amount paid by Miss Perkins to Lulu for her services. But the girl, home-bred and home-taught in the little parsonage, where self-denial went hand in hand with truest love, had never seen such discontent, such fretfulness, and such poverty of resource, as confronted her every day in her employer's house. There were days when Lulu was so homesick for that bit of a cottage, with its penury and pri-

vations, and its brave, courageous facing of difficulties, and joyous endeavor, that she wanted to fly back there. Only the thought of what her earnings meant to the dear people at Lonesome Ford kept her steadfast at her post. She was helping along, and that was a comfort.

"Lulu," said Miss Perkins, one morning in early April, "the Flower Committee will be sending somebody round for my contribution to the Easter decoration of the church. Run out to the greenhouse and ask John what he can send. Not that I care much for Easter," she added.

Lulu loved the greenhouse, especially now. As she pushed open the door, and stepped into the warm, moist atmosphere, noticing how the beaded drops stood on pane and roof, how the dear little violets were scenting the air and smiling as if glad to be alive, observing the carnations and jonquils making a riot of color, the azaleas whiter than the drifted and new-fallen snow, and the lilies uplifting their beauty in sheaves, she was for an instant spellbound. She drew a deep breath of delight. The crusty old Scotch gardener, who liked Lulu, gave her a red rose, and told her to report that he would have flowers and to spare for Easter.

"Flowers and to spare," she repeated, wistfully, with a longing look in her blue eyes. "Oh, John! Many to spare?"

"Why surely, miss, a heap of them," he answered. "Miss Perkins can provide all her friends with Easter posies this April."

Lulu went slowly back. She was trying to gather up her resolution to the point of asking Miss Perkins to send some Easter bloom to the little church at Lonesome Ford. Oh, if she but dared to propose it!

Such a rough little church it was, built of logs, and with hard pews that had no backs. A mere shelter from wind and weather; but her father was so thankful to have it, and when it was filled to the door, as sometimes it hap-

pened to be, with the miners and their wives and children, Lulu had seen a look on that father's face that made her understand how Moses must have beamed on the people when his countenance shone after communion with God in the secret fastnesses of the mountains.

"What are you thinking of, my dear?" asked Miss Perkins, an hour later, suddenly growing aware of the far-away look in Lulu's eyes.

The girl pulled herself together. It was part of a companion's duty to be cheerful and not absent-minded.

"I was just then at Lonesome Ford, I'm afraid, Miss Perkins. It's a year since I saw mother and her last letter shows me that she is not well. I've been wondering if I ought not to go home."

"Nonsense, child, you can't leave me. I'm not well, either."

"I know, dear Miss Perkins, but you have so many friends, and a good doctor, and the servants all devoted to you, and mother has nobody but father and the children."

The spinster sighed inaudibly. Her thoughts were reminiscent. Helen Sherman and herself had been seat-mates at school. Not one of her class had been more beautiful, more fascinating, more brilliant and clever than Helen Sherman. When she married Frank Bond, and went away as a home missionary to a wilderness exile, to want, and hard work, and a life cut off from the world, most of her acquaintances had soon forgotten her. Charlotte Perkins had kept up a rambling correspondence, writing to and hearing from Helen at long intervals, finally sending for Lulu, when she felt too acutely the isolation of her own home. Helen had not done so badly, Miss Perkins thought, to have raised a daughter like Lulu, to have five other children, sons and daughters, and a husband of Frank's calibre. Why, oh! why, with his talents, had he buried himself there? Why had he never come out of the desert, come where he might have a city parish?

Miss Perkins was a woman given to rapid decisions. She made up her mind quickly, and having ways and means at her command, she never had to hesitate long. A project flashed upon her imagination suddenly.

"Telephone to Madame Rosalind and Mrs. Dunwiddie to come up at once with samples," she said. "You and I must take a little journey; we are both getting blue, and we both need a new outfit, Lulu. I want you to look as charming as twenty ought to, my dear."

Lulu obeyed, but with a sinking heart. The drawing homeward was so strong, so peremptory, and here was a new departure; probably she was to go across the continent again, as she had already done twice or thrice, at the caprice of Miss Perkins. What did she care for more new frocks? Her wardrobe was bulging with raiment now, and her mother had nothing but a shiny alpaca for best, and a gingham for everyday, while her father's coat was white at the seams, and hopelessly shabby. The money she sent was to educate the boys. None of it would be spent for clothes, she was sure.

"Lulu!"

"Yes, Miss Perkins."

"Is your mother as stout as I am?"

Lulu laughed.

"Mother is no larger than I. She is as slender and thin as if she were sixteen."

"Indeed! Well, she is to be congratulated. I do hate being so stout."

Lulu made no reply.

"You may as well pack up everything of yours that she can make over for the children. Helen was always a genius with her needle, I remember, and send the box right along. And I have a letter for her, that is to be put in the middle of the box; her birthday comes on Easter Sunday this year."

Lulu stared in surprise. Miss Perkins surveyed her

gravely. "Child," she said, "you are not the only person in the world who loves your mother, and knows that she is sweet and brave and too good for us all. That she belongs, and your father, too, both of them, belong to the band of whom the world is not worthy. By the by, when you go to pack, send old John up to see me."

John, a little rheumatic, gray as a badger, and a gardener from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, came hobbling into his mistress's presence.

"John," she said, "I'm going away. You will see that the Easter flowers are sent to the church in time, and send also as many as you can of the leftovers to the hospitals. But, tell me, can you possibly pack a box of lilies and ferns and roses, and get it to Lonesome Ford, where Miss Lulu's parents live, in good order, the day before Easter? It's two days' journey, John."

"The thing can be done, madam."

"Then, you do it. And mind, John, Miss Lulu is not to know one iota about it."

The next week was a perfect whirl of dressmaking, errand-going and dismantling the house. Lulu noticed that Miss Perkins was preparing for a long jaunt. When she asked where they were going, Miss Perkins gave her a very curt reply. So that she felt her inquiry inopportune, and did not venture another allusion to the subject. But she was not a girl to mope, and having decided that it was right to stay with her employer for the time, she maintained her serenity, was bright and sunny, and so lovable that Miss Perkins had hard work to persevere in her reserve, and not disclose the destination to which they would presently be bound.

The truth was that Miss Perkins had resolved to go to Lonesome Ford, take Lulu, and see for herself what Helen's life was.

They started westward on a Wednesday, stopping off each evening to rest in a hotel. Miss Perkins had a horror

of sleeping-cars. Before very long Lulu divined the intention of their trip, and was mentally swinging, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth. She was wild with rapture at the thought of seeing home again. She was cold with dismay at the impression home would make on Miss Perkins' mind.

They arrived at the last station, and were deposited on a rough platform where there was not a house in sight. An old, ramshackle stage, with a nondescript harness and a pair of mules, would take them the last five miles. As they climbed into this conveyance, Lulu could have hugged the rough, red-faced driver, who squeezed her hand until it ached.

"Oh, Jim Carson!" she cried, "how are father and mother?"

"Your pop's hearty, Lulu, but your marm's looking peaked. Be this lady goin' home with you, Lulu?"

"Yes, Jim. This is Miss Perkins, a friend of my mother's."

"Pleased to meet you, ma'am," said Jim, affably, extending a rough paw, and crushing Miss Perkins' hand almost as fiercely as he had Lulu's.

To say that Charlotte Perkins had a novel sensation when she sat at Frank Bond's right that evening, and heard him ask God's blessing on the frugal meal that was served before the family, faintly expresses the case. She had seen poverty in city tenements, afar off. Now she met it close by in a home as exquisitely clean as her own, though bare as an empty plate. Only necessities there. Not a useless cup or saucer.

In the two days before Easter, she had a revelation of the dignity, the beauty, the stern asceticism of the life Frank Bond and his wife had chosen. She saw the bleak holes in the ground under which lay untold wealth of mineral and ore. Lulu took her around to the cabins to make friends with the people. Her heart went out to them.

Frank carried her with him in his creaking old buggy to visit his sick parishioners miles away, for his was a widely scattered flock.

Not a complaint, not a whispered murmur did she hear, but when the box came, a day after the travelers, and Helen found a roll of crisp ten dollar bills as her birthday present, she put her arms around Charlotte's neck and cried.

"My dear," she said, "I haven't seen so much money at one time since I was a girl. But why did you send it by freight?"

"When I sent it, Helen, I was not quite certain that after all, I would dare to come. But the yearning in Lulu's eyes pleaded with me, and it was borne upon me that I was getting to be a selfish old maid, and I fancied seeing you would give me a lift into a better life, and it has. Yes, it has."

John's box of flowers came in season, and very early in the dawn of Easter Day, Miss Perkins, and Lulu, and the children stole out of the little house like ghosts. They crept into the church, and garlanded the pulpit, and made the table in front of the altar most beautiful with lilies. Then, full of excitement, they softly went home.

Lonesome Ford always wanted to hear Mr. Bond's Easter sermon. Indeed, he was a man with a message, and therefore he never failed in having people to listen to him. But when he stepped inside his church door and saw the flowers, such flowers as had adorned the church at home, the day he married Helen Sherman, his eyes were dim with tears. He opened the Bible and read from the Song of Solomon: "My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo! the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

"Frank Bond," said Miss Perkins, the day before she went home, three months later, "you should have a wider

field. There are people in D——— with souls to be saved. Won't you leave this endlessly hard work and take up something at home if the way is opened?"

"No, Charlotte Perkins, not while the Lord makes it plain to me that I am needed here at Lonesome Ford."

"I shall leave Lulu here to take care of you awhile, and carry Helen back to civilization," was her reply.

"You may do that. I would like my wife to have a holiday. She has borne the burden and the heat, and often has been stronger than I. God bless her. Yes, she may have a vacation from Lonesome Ford, but I'll stand in my lot still, for God has given me health and strength."

And, valiant for the truth, Frank Bond is at Lonesome Ford yet.

THE WAIF'S BLESSING

WHEN Marvin Ennis died, he left a large house, a good farm, and a tidy sum in bank, to be equally divided between his two girls, motherless from their early childhood. The will was very brief, and no directions were given as to the manner of dividing the property, though Squire Davidson, who knew the peculiarities of the Ennis people, pleaded for definite instructions when the will was drawn, to save future trouble, he said. The gray old father shook his head positively. "Let them settle it to suit themselves. I won't be above ground to bother with it."

Both daughters had ministered very tenderly to their father, though neither addressed a word to the other, unless it were absolutely necessary. They were twins, and forty years old, and the village had long since accepted them as they were, and had stopped speculating about them and their peculiarities.

Once or twice, while Marvin Ennis lay ill, he had fancied that he could bring about a reconciliation between them if he tried. He had always, however, had a man's instinctive dislike to a fuss, and a man's repulsion from scenes. To let things go had been the motto of his easy-going life, except in business, where he had been keen and able. It was a good inheritance he was leaving these girls. Girls they seemed to him as he lay on his bed, girls rosy, dimpled, sweet, as they had been when they first grew up, and he had taken pride in their beauty. Ah! if their mother had but lived to train these spoiled children, he would recall with a pang, and then would cease to think of interference, that they were forty years old, and the strife be-

tween them had lasted twenty of those years. The village of Upper Rockwell had grown accustomed to seeing the Ennis girls, as the two would continue to be called while they were spinsters, taking their part in church work and society as remote from each other as if they were not even acquaintances, the two never appearing at the same time, if it could be helped. When Sue came to church in the surrey, Jane walked, and *vice versa*. Unlike most twins, the sisters were opposites in looks and disposition. Sue was tall, dark and stately. Jane was short, plump and baby-faced, with golden hair, beginning to frost over in spots. Yet Jane was the more stubborn and the less amiable of the two. In her heart there was an incapacity for forgiveness that was like cold iron. She had never pardoned Sue for the defection of Abner Perkins, though Sue had been only a little to blame.

That, too, was an old story now. Abner Perkins had been engaged to Jane, and they were to have been married. So near had been the event that Jane's wedding dress was bought, and her underclothing, all lace-trimmed and embroidered, was laid away in the same trunk with the uncut white satin that was to have been the bride's gown. Sue divined by accident and intuition that Abner's heart was not filled by Jane. She saw that he had drifted into the engagement through propinquity, and that he loved Carrie Means and Carrie loved him. Through Sue's tactful generalship, the engagement was broken, she saying, when her father remonstrated with her, "Let sleeping dogs lie; it isn't your affair." "Father, I cannot sit still and see three lives spoiled."

Abner married Carrie and went away, and was lost to sight in the West. Rumors floated back that he was poor, unsuccessful, unhappy; then there came the tale of Carrie's death, then silence. Jane and Sue Ennis remained at home, alien and apart, and Marvin Ennis at last turned his face to the wall, and was gathered to his fathers.

Curiosity was soon satisfied as to what the Ennis girls would do. They literally divided the house perpendicularly. Sue set up housekeeping in solitude on the east side, and her friends used the side door. Jane's part was the west side, and hers was the front door. They had the farm worked on shares by a neighbor, and, as now, each lady had her own horse, her own cow, and her own chickens. They lived in entire independence, and did not quarrel—as how could they, having no occasion for speech? Besides, they had never had vulgar quarrels in words.

New Year's Day, this fifth year of the girls' living alone, was very cold and clear. Just as each woman in the early gray of the morning sat down to her solitary breakfast, a faint cry was heard outside. Jane thought it was a stray kitten, and hurried to find out. Cats were very precious in her eyes. Sue recognized a child's cry, and hurried out, too. Both reached the baby at the same moment. It lay in the very front of the house, in the precise middle of the imaginary dividing line. Its head was toward Jane, its feet toward Sue. Both arrived at the spot at once, but it was Sue who caught the child, half-frozen as it was, and hugged it to her breast.

In her excitement, Jane forgot to be silent. "That's not fair," she said, "the child's head was on my side."

"I'm afraid it's going to have a fit," exclaimed Sue; "what shall I do?"

"Bring it right in here," replied Jane, imperatively. "You were always clumsy with dolls. You don't know what a baby needs. I do."

Sue obeyed. She crossed the threshold of Jane's front door. She sat down in Jane's Boston rocker. She held the baby while Jane brought a basin, heated water for a bath, and milk to feed the child, and presently the little thing, warmed and fed, cooed, gurgled in baby contentment, and laughed aloud.

That baby laugh suddenly melted the ice in both

women's hearts. The farmer, coming in with Jane's brimming pail of milk, stared in open-eyed wonder at the amazing sight of the two, so long estranged, fondling a year-old baby, examining its clothing, forgetting their differences in a warm desire to do good to it. Why, it seemed to his dull comprehension as if, in the person of the little waif that had been left at their door in the cold and the snow, the Christ-Child had come and beaten down the bars of hatred in their hearts.

Indeed, for some time each had been silently wishing for a return of peace. Sue heard Jane cough in the night and longed to go in and give her a soothing draught. Jane saw Sue set off to the village and come back with parcels, and had a woman's wish to know what they were. The baby was left at just the right moment.

For some hours it did not occur to them to ask whose it was. But in the afternoon word came that a woman had been found dying by the wayside, near Holcomb's Woods, and she had said, as she was carried to the hospital, that she had left her child near a house a bit further back.

"I saw women there. I thought they would care for her, and I could carry my baby no further," she said. She died that night.

The waif of New Year's morning was a bonny child, and the sisters called her Winifred, after their mother. Of her parentage they knew nothing, nor did they care from whom she came. Her mother had decent burial at their expense, and the divided house was turned into a single home again, while the twins made baby clothes and chatted as they had never done since Abner Perkins had been as a wedge to drive them apart.

Jane brought down her mother's old cradle from the garret and turned it into a nest for Winifred. Sue looked up her mother's recipe books to discover delicacies that might please a child's palate. The child throve on love. It had indeed brought a New Year's blessing with it into

a house that had been starved for human affection and Christian forgiveness.

One evening, as the sisters sat amicably discussing plans and gossiping over their sewing, there came a rap at the door. Sue opened it.

A neighbor stood there with a shawl over her head. She had an air of bringing news, of subdued importance.

"Girls," she exclaimed, "Abner Perkins is back again. John Henry saw him last night. He looks just the same as ever, and I thought I'd put you on your guard. He may be coming here to call."

Jane's delicate face flushed, but Sue was equal to the emergency. "Why, of course," she answered. "You are very good, Mrs. Judson, but you need not have been disturbed. If Abner calls we'll be glad to see him."

Jane astonished both women by her words. The blush had left her cheek, and she gathered her courage in both hands.

"Yes, Mrs. Judson," she said, "Abner Perkins has come, because I sent for him. I had a letter from him from Arizona, three weeks ago. I sent him a telegraphic dispatch. Abner will be here to call this evening."

Something in her manner made Mrs. Judson feel *de trop,* though she was not ordinarily a sensitive person. She said good-night and went home. On the road she met Abner Perkins, stout, cheerful-looking, as sure of his welcome as if he had not caused a twenty-years' heartache, going back to find his second wife in his old sweetheart.

The marriage with Carrie Means had been a mistake. He had never ceased to love Jane Ennis, he declared, and there was a color of truth in the statement, for he had been a widower seven years. To come back in poverty went against his New England pride. He waited till his luck had turned, and he came back a rich man.

So the old satin was brought out, and its shining lengths were cut, and it made a beautiful wedding gown

for Jane. And she and Abner went to their own house, leaving Sue to bring up the New Year's baby on the beautiful big Ennis place. And Winifred was the greatest comfort! Waif of the tempest of life, she was a flower of gracious girlhood, as like One who came before her, she grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

A KNIGHT OF AVENUE A

AVENUE A is a neighborhood wherein boys abound, and they have no play place but the street. As many of the lads go to work as soon as the law will allow, the evening is their especial playtime, and, boys being only men in miniature, fighting and wars are often a part of their fiercely enjoyed recreation. The gangs of fellows from one block or another are organized loosely yet firmly under able leaders, and, on occasion, they meet and make night hideous by their howls and cries, and the furious clash of their violent onset.

When the ladies from a region far away uptown invaded the avenue, hired a house and set up a home in the very midst of the most crowded neighborhood, the residents already on the spot were puzzled. What did these newcomers mean? Why had they forsaken their natural and appropriate environment for quarters that must seem strange and comfortless? The mothers held aloof, the young girls were at first shy, and the children hung round the door, like birds looking for crumbs, who would take wing and scurry off at a hint of further acquaintance. But the ladies had a piano, a harp and a mandolin, and, evening after evening, there was sweet music in their home. The doors flew open at the most timid touch, and the welcome was so cordial that the ice of Avenue A was soon melted, as snow melts in a January thaw.

The girls and young women were won before the boys, more cautious, and less disposed to seek indoor ease and instruction in the classes and clubs that the Settlement initiated, came asking for admission. After awhile, however, there were petitions from the boys, and they were

drawn into the light, warmth and gladness of evenings with men and women who cared for them, young men from colleges, who understood boy nature, having added their skilled assistance, when Boys' Clubs were formed. The avenue gangs worked harmoniously enough when mustered into civic and patriotic associations, in which they studied, discussed problems, and occasionally had a supper, called in boy parlance "a feed," together.

Rudolph Goldstein was a low-browed, dark-eyed, shrewd-looking youth of sixteen, a youth of excellent natural abilities and absolutely no advantages. He had lived in a rear tenement, in a cellar-basement, flooded in the spring rains, cold in the zero winters, and stifling in the summer heats, all his life, and he was one of thirteen children. The poverty of his home was something the workers at the Settlement could not gauge; but they could and did estimate rightly, before very long, the strong character of Rudolph. He was full of gentle intuitions, and there was a vein of poetry in his soul. Not an unworthy member was Rudolph of that mighty race which produces poets, musicians, bankers and statesmen, and which once had among its people a shepherd boy who killed a lion and a bear when they attacked his flock, and whose psalms are sung today in every Christian assemblage.

Rudolph admired all the women who took a hand in helping along the clubs, and in making good men of the boys who joined them. But most of all he revered two—the Little Old Lady, and the Lame Princess. These two did not live in the Settlement itself, but they often visited it. The Little Old Lady had white hair, and soft, shining black eyes. She wore furs that wrapped her from head to feet, and she always arrived in a carriage with a coachman and a footman on the box. The Lame Princess was a golden-haired child with a crutch, and she was always with the Little Old Lady, whom she called grandmother. Rudolph had never seen any one so beautiful as this child,

yet he held in even closer fondness the dear elderly woman, who was so genial, so courteous, and so wise. For generations, old women had been deferred to and obeyed in Oriental countries, and Rudolph, a Jewish boy living in Avenue A, New York, was, in every fibre of his nature, a son of the Orient.

There was peace for a long time between the rival factions that had once made the avenue a scene of wild conflict night after night. But finally, a reaction set in. Some of the more restless spirits wearied of the evening study. A snowstorm brought a chance for sport such as city boys prize. There was ice enough in some places for long and delightfully perilous sliding. With scouts stationed at the corners to give timely warning of "Cheese it, cop, cop," if a stout policeman loomed alarmingly on the horizon, the fellows had grand times sliding, and indulged in snowball fights which were most exciting. This was all right until the old enmity awoke between the Fifteenth and Fourteenth street gangs, and the snow-fights became deadly battles, in which each group grew angry and tried to do real harm to the other.

Rudolph, as leader of the Fifteenth street force, felt the joy of battle, and, for a while, forgot the pleasure of the warm room, the wide tables, and the bright lights of the club. "Aw, now!" he said, "a fellow must have some fun!" when his mother remonstrated. She, poor woman, knew what the good ladies were doing for her boys and girls, and prized the evening learning, as a stepping-stone that might enable them to climb out of the basement one of these days, to a first or second floor tenement. The father was growing old and stooped over his tailoring. Rudolph was in a big store downtown. He, at least, would not have to sit cross-legged with a needle in his hand all his days.

The firm that employed Rudolph had promoted him twice since he had been under the influence of the Settle-

ment, each time increasing his pay. And one of his employers had recently presented the boy with a garment of which his mother was very proud. A long, perfectly whole, and very nice raincoat, which Rudolph wore over a red sweater, which the Little Old Lady had given him for Christmas. The Lame Princess had given him red mittens, but these reposed, as a rule, in Rudolph's pocket. His hands could bear a good deal of cold without flinching.

Well, the battles of the gangs were at their height, when a thaw dropped upon the city as stealthily and suddenly as a thief in the night. The streets were rivers of slush, the gutters were abysmal, the sidewalks were a horror. As for the boys, they declared a truce, and went back in a body to the Settlement, where the forgiving ladies received them with kindness, crullers and hot coffee.

On the second night of the thaw, when the slush had partially yielded, who should take it into her head to visit the clubs but the Little Old Lady? And the Lame Princess, too, of course. The woodenly carved coachman and footman had their own opinion of such folly, but did not express it. And in the carriage, under the warm robes, with their feet on a heater, and every luxury around them, the two visitors—both child and grandmother—were as cozy as in their own home.

When they arrived at the Settlement, there was a difficulty unexpected and distressing. The carriage could not get quite close to the pavement, owing to débris and heaped up snow, and the pavement was evidently freezing over. The footman lifted the Lame Princess in his arms and carried her in bodily, but no footman could presume thus to convey the Little Old Lady, who, if as short as the late Queen Victoria, was also as stout and "hefty," as the man on the sidewalk confided, *sotto voce,* to the man on the box.

At this moment Rudolph appeared on the scene, with his crowd of followers. At one glance he seized the situation. "Come on, fellows!" he shouted, "and bring your

shinny sticks! These were conveniently kept in the lower hall of the Settlement. With a yell of joy, which made the Little Old Lady laugh till the tears ran down her cheeks, the lads with the shinny sticks cleared a place for the carriage to approach close to the sidewalk; then off came Rudolph's splendid raincoat, and down it went on the slippery pavement, that the Little Old Lady might walk over it in safety to the steps. Never had Rudolph heard of Queen Elizabeth or Sir Walter Raleigh, but Sir Walter's hero-heart was his, and he performed a knightly act for the lady he adored.

A few years hence, and Rudolph and his comrades will be boys no longer. They will be men and citizens, taking their share in the government of our great republic. They are wide-awake, energetic, and capable fellows, inured to hardship and open to whatever influence is strongest in their lives. Shall it be the saloon? Shall it be the Settlement? The Little Old Lady and the Lame Princess, and the young people from the colleges and universities, and some of the good men and women who sit in the pews every Sunday, are doing what they can for Rudolph and his friends. Nobody, even if he dwell remote from the big town, can afford to be indifferent to what is accomplished in the tenement districts, for New York is the heart, and the outlying suburbs are the extremities. And as the heart-throbs beat, so the extremities are healthful or feeble. One gallant deed of courtesy to womanhood, one knightly *devoir* gladly paid, is a pledge of the future which is worth something to us all. God bless the fellows who are growing up in Avenue A, and enroll them in His own great army!

THE TROUBLE AT INGLESIDE

"INGLESIDE'S good name is in danger, sister," said Miss Rowena solemly to Miss Kroutz, who was the principal of the school. "Something must be done, and done at once."

"But the difficulty is," replied Miss Kroutz, "there is nobody to suspect. The servants have been with us for years, and surely there is not one of the pupils who would steal. If it is a pupil, she is a kleptomaniac, of course. I have never come in contact with a kleptomaniac, and I cannot associate the idea with any of our girls." Miss Kroutz shook her head mournfully.

"You know, sister Katharine," Miss Rowena urged, "that if this thing is allowed to go on, it will injure our reputation. The parents will not like to send their daughters back, if these depredations are not checked. It exposes innocent girls to contamination as well as loss, for I do not believe in the kleptomaniac theory. I call a person who steals, a thief, in plain terms."

The Misses Kroutz had carried on their seminary for young ladies prosperously and efficiently since their own girlhood, and they were now stately women of middle age. The school was very select, also very homelike, and when, latterly, small losses of pocket money, jewelry, and even ties and combs were constantly reported, the situation was both novel and trying.

"The girls ought to be more careful of their purses," said Miss Kroutz, wearily.

"There should be no occasion for them to be careful," said Miss Rowena, firmly.

Both ladies were exceedingly distressed. The school it-

self was unhappy. There was a cloud brooding over every one. And now as the Christmas examinations were drawing near, the girls could not fix their minds on their work. It was a new experience at Ingleside, this of locking bureau drawers and trunks, of bolting bedroom doors at night, and of hiding one's belongings, for fear they might be lost.

Even as the principal and her sister conferred, they were interrupted by one of the seniors, who happened at the door, and came in with a very white and scared countenance.

"Well, Angie," said Miss Rowena, "what else has happened?"

Instinctively, everyone's first thought was of the annoyances which were becoming increasingly frequent.

Angie Bryant was a tall, slender girl, dressed in deep mourning. Her eyes filled with tears and her lips quivered as she said that her mother's picture had vanished from her dressing-table, and with it a ring of chased gold, which had been lying loosely on her hairpin tray.

Miss Rowena repressed an exclamation of impatience. She had not dealt with schoolgirls for thirty years without learning how careless they are in leaving their things about.

"I do wish you would all wear your rings, or give them to me to keep in the safe," she said earnestly, then added: "But, Angie, who would covet the photograph of your dear mother? Its value to you is inestimable, but to others it would only be the picture of an unknown lady."

"I know that, and I have had it on my mind for that reason. I feel as if mamma is near me when I can look at her sweet face, and she seems to pervade the place where I am. Somehow heaven does not seem so awfully distant with my mother at my side. The picture all but speaks. I have dreamed of losing this treasure, and now the dream has come true."

Before Angie had fairly reached her room, another girl, Beth Armour, followed her with a complaint.

"Miss Kroutz and Miss Rowena, my desk was opened last night, and my essay—the first rough draft—was carried off. Nobody but Angie Bryant and I knew that I was writing the examination essay, and to any other girl than I it would be mere waste paper. It is most vexatious, and I think it has been done as a trick—a practical joke."

Miss Rowena was a little lady—a wee bit of a dame, but of most dignified presence. She drew herself up to her full height, and had the effect thus of being very impressive.

"Elizabeth Armour, I agree with you. A practical joke of this sort is very unseemly and very discreditable to Ingleside. It appears as if the series of disgraceful occurrences which have disturbed our tranquillity of late belong to the same category. I shall sift the matter—sift it to the bottom, and shall begin, with my sister's permission, by searching every box, trunk and drawer in the house."

Miss Kroutz was reluctant to consent, but as the search was to be general and public, and as the losers of property were numerous, she yielded. One of the most puzzling particulars was that the thief could not dispose of the goods taken in any apparently easy way. Ingleside was in the country, six miles from the railway station, and there was no village. No young lady, and no servant had gone away for the last month, and the only visitors had been the clergyman of the parish, his wife, and sister, and two elderly ladies, former preceptresses at Ingleside.

The trunks were searched, the rooms were ransacked, closets and cubby-holes were, so to speak, turned inside out, but all to no purpose. Not a missing brooch, or ribbon, or crisp dollar bill, or shining silver piece made its reappearance, and not a sign was discovered of Beth's lamented essay, or Angie's mother's picture.

Miss Kroutz consulted her lawyer, an old friend of her family. The situation was more than perplexing; it was alarming.

Mr. Clemend advised philosophy. "Evidently," he declared, "some one of these sweet young girls is addicted to dishonesty, and is very adroit in hiding her tracks. If her conscience could be touched, she might make restitution."

"We have prayed for light," said Miss Kroutz, "but none is given us." She continued, "I will personally make up to the girls for all they lose, so far as I can. But there are some things I cannot return, as, for instance, Elizabeth's essay."

That very night, Miss Rowena, in her first sleep, was vaguely aware of some one in her room. Thus far, the teachers had lost nothing. The step that disturbed her, the faint waft of chill air from a softly opened door, were hardly more than enough to startle her slightly as she turned on her pillow, and being very tired she relapsed quickly into sleep again. She would have thought the experience a dream, if she had not in the morning discovered that her watch was gone. Miss Rowena's watch! If there was an article at Ingleside which was invested with sacredness, which partook of its owner's personality, it was that admirable timepiece, presented, as all the girls knew, to Rowena Kroutz on her twentieth birthday by her father, in appreciation of her rare qualities of heart and mind. More, it was not a watch bought originally for Miss Rowena; it was an heirloom.

Miss Rowena was now thoroughly incensed; she said little, but she meditated long. Finally, she announced to Miss Kroutz and the staff of assistants gathered in conclave that she should sit up and watch every night till she had solved the mystery. Miss Eleanor Kirkman, the teacher of rhetoric, agreed to share the first of her vigils. Nothing of their intention was disclosed to the girls. For two nights nothing happened. On the third, the *dénouement* came.

When everything was hushed at Ingleside in the dead stillness of midnight, as Miss Rowena and Miss Eleanor

were nodding beside a shaded lamp in the dim precincts of the library, they were suddenly shaken into alert wakefulness by the unmistakable sound of a footfall on the stair. It was a bare foot, and it made almost no noise; but they heard it, stepping slowly and carefully down, one step at a time, as a child descends, and there was also a very soft swish as of a trailing garment. Miss Kirkman would have screamed, but Miss Rowena's grip on her arm was of iron, and Miss Rowena's eyes were stern.

"Not a breath!" she whispered. "Come with me."

Truly there was nothing to fear, and the mystery was at once cleared. For, there on the stairway, clothed in her white nightgown, her long, fair hair in a heavy braid, her unseeing eyes looking neither to the right nor the left, came Angie Bryant, and in her hand was an unlighted silver candlestick, always kept on a bracket in the upper hall. On, on she came, through the corridor to the back door, which she noiselessly opened; then down the steps, and through the long garden to the old summer-house, which nobody ever entered.

"Oh, poor, poor Angie!" cried Miss Rowena, as she caught up a long shaker cloak and enveloped herself in its folds to follow Angie. Miss Kirkman's golf cap and cape were on a peg in the hall. They were warmly protected against the cold night, but the sleep-walker was lightly clad.

They walked down the long garden walk between the rows of privet and box, past the white statues set here and there among the flower-beds and over the narrow foot-bridge that spanned a little ravine, and paused at the summer-house, which Angie had entered. They observed her silently.

With the utmost care Angie deposited the candle-stick in a recess under the seat in the summer-house. Then she retraced her path, and did not stop until she gained her own chamber again.

Examination found every missing bit of property safe. Not a trinket, not a knickknack, not a pocketbook but was there in the miscellaneous collection of the kleptomaniac somnambulist. Miss Rowena was now confronted by a yet more delicate and difficult obligation. She sent for the physician who looked after the Ingleside girls when they were ill. He advised quietly returning every article to its owner, without further explanation than the information that it had been discovered after search and that nobody was to blame. "But," he said, "tell Miss Angie the whole story when you give her back her mother's picture. It will be a great shock, and a shock often proves the needed remedy for somnambulism."

Ingleside no longer suffers from predatory incursions. Angie Bryant was far more chagrined at finding herself the author of deeds of darkness than in discovering that she walked in her sleep. She has never repeated the latter performance, and she has had a long fit of illness, from which she has recovered, entirely to be trusted, asleep or awake.

MISS PAMELA'S EASTER BONNET

IT had been the custom of Miss Pamela Brent to buy a new bonnet every year in time to be worn on Easter Sunday. On that day Miss Pamela always appeared in church in a gray silk gown that was either new or had been so freshened up that it had an effect of newness. Her gloves, her shoes, every item of her dainty toilet, bespoke studied care at Easter-tide. The neighbors and old friends of Miss Pamela had for so many seasons observed her practice of renovation as to costume that it had finally been taken for granted, and was anticipated precisely as were the birds and flowers that punctually came back to make beautiful the spring.

At other seasons of the year Miss Pamela contentedly wore old clothes, and an irreverent young cousin several degrees removed laughingly asserted that she had seen the same bonnet and cloak on Cousin Pamela at Christmas for the last dozen years. This was probably true. Miss Pamela thought anything good enough for the storm and cold of the winter, but long ago, in her girlhood, she had felt the thrill of romance in the spring, and although all that was left to her of that early dream was a mound in the cemetery, she still liked to dress at Easter in the fresh and dainty fashion as to fabric and tint that had once pleased the eyes of her only lover.

When the village milliner sent to town for her spring orders, they included, as a rule, something rather fine and costly for Pamela Brent. She was now well past sixty, but this made no difference with her in the fastidious delicacy of her annual choice.

When, therefore, April returned and the milliner re-

ceived no visit of the usual kind from a customer on whom she depended for at least one order, and when, instead of guests coming and going, Miss Pamela drove around in her phaeton quite alone, Phillipsburg began to wonder what had happened. There were hints that Miss Pamela's income had been much reduced by the failure of a bank in New York. One or two of the bolder spirits ventured to put the question to the little gray lawyer who had been Miss Pamela's agent for many years. As well might questions have been asked of a silent statue. Finally, Easter Sunday came, and for the first time in a long life Pamela Brent walked into church in her last year's attire, on which there not so much as a bow or a flower to indicate the smallest renewal.

She did not, however, come alone. She was accompanied by two persons, who sat beside her in the pew, one of them a very old gentleman who carried a gold-headed cane and otherwise looked exceedingly prosperous, and the other a tiny child in a blue gingham frock, a white jacket and a sailor hat. The child sat very close to Miss Pamela during the service, and once or twice the lady's arm was lovingly thrown about her. No one would have been surprised that a child should be seated beside Miss Pamela had there not been a general impression that she took very little interest in children, her visitors having ordinarily been selected from a group of old friends, most of whom had now passed the meridian. At several dinner tables on Easter Sunday speculation was rife about the old gentleman and the little girl. Indeed, their advent was as much a theme of conversation as the beauty of the Easter flowers and the charm of the Easter music. Something had happened, evidently. What the something was could not be determined. The young cousin, Marjorie Elmendorf, made up her mind that she would try to find out. After Sunday school, which was held immediately at the close of the morning service, Marjorie had slipped her hand

into Cousin Pamela's and had asked her if she might call to see her later in the day. "Come to supper, dear," was the reply. So to supper Marjorie went.

The old gentleman who was seated in an armchair by the window rose very courteously when Marjorie entered, and when Miss Pamela presented her to him she recognized his name as that of an aged minister of whom she had heard her father speak. The little girl was not visible. Marjorie looked around hoping that she would see her, but now that she was really in the room she did not quite like to put a direct question. Pamela saved her the trouble. "You wanted to see little Jessie, I am sure," she said quietly. The child is not very strong, and she has had a good deal of excitement and a long journey. She has had her supper and has gone to bed. Poor little dear! If I can only make her happy here with me I shall feel that I have not lived altogether in vain."

"You mean to say," asked Marjorie, "that you have adopted a little girl?" She bit her tongue suddenly, for she was about to add, "at your age." That would have been rude, and in her mind there floated the suggestion that it was a strange time to adopt a child when an elderly lady was supposed to have lost money.

"Yes," answered Pamela, "I have done exactly that. Jessie is the granddaughter of an old schoolmate of mine, and as Dr. Ainslie was coming from the South to visit one or two institutions of learning in the North, he was kind enough to care for her on the way to me. It was all planned some months ago. I discovered almost by accident that Susan Rainsford's granddaughter was in an asylum, and I could not allow that condition to continue. It has all been so beautiful, Marjorie dear. The child has reached me just in time to let me double my Easter thank offering. I have been needing somebody to love, somebody to be altogether my own, and God has sent this opportunity to me."

"May I run upstairs and see her?" inquired Marjorie.

"Yes," again replied Miss Pamela. "You will find her in the little room that opens out of mine."

Marjorie was familiar with her cousin's house and went straight to Miss Pamela's own room. She found the little room that opened out of it transformed into a bower of sweetness and cheer. The old paper had been replaced by one that had a pattern of apple blossoms, and the room was green, pink and white. Little Jessie was not asleep. She had on a nightgown trimmed with lace that was a little yellow and had the perfume of lavender. It was not a child's night dress, and Marjorie thought that it had been taken from Miss Pamela's own wardrobe, as indeed it had. She talked a moment or two to Jessie, kissed her, and slipped downstairs again, saying to herself, "This accounts for Pamela's forgetting that it was time to buy her Easter bonnet." It did cross her mind, but the thought was at once dismissed, that possibly Pamela was growing modern and was deciding not to inaugurate a change of fashion on Easter day. As she again stepped into the drawing-room the old gentleman was taking his leave. She heard him say, "God bless you, dear friend, and give you four-fold for all you have done, and make the rest of your life a continual feast." She came up and said good-bye to him, and stood in the background while Pamela accompanied her guest to the door. As, an hour later, they sat at tea together, Marjorie suddenly exclaimed, "Cousin Pamela, I don't want to be intrusive, but have you really lost your money?"

Miss Pamela smiled. "I have perhaps lost something," she said, "but I have plenty left. There is no occasion for anybody to worry. What made you inquire?"

"How could I help it? You never at Easter looked the way you did this morning, and somehow you didn't match the flowers, nor the music, and you almost spoiled my enjoyment of Easter. Why in the world should your adopt-

ing a little girl have prevented you from buying a new bonnet?"

"To tell the truth," answered Pamela, "I decided a while ago that I was thinking too much about vanities. I mended up my old gloves and had my old shoes repaired and looked at my old bonnet and decided that it would do for another season, and then I sent my Easter offering a little in advance to the headquarters of the society. Then, as I had the opportunity to adopt this dear child, I made an estimate of what it would cost to clothe and educate her, and I have arranged to set aside enough to provide whatever she may need, if God spares her, until she is through college. So, Marjorie, you can see that you will have to bear with a shabby lady for your cousin for this year at least."

Marjorie's cheeks grew very pink, and her eyes very bright. "You are a perfect dear," she said, "but you must forgive me if I say, Cousin Pamela, that it looks to me as if you were somehow making a mistake. Won't you tell me truly now who that old gentleman is? I am sure there is a story about him."

"No story, dear child," said Miss Pamela, "except," and her voice sank to a lower tone than usual, "that he is an aged kinsman of the man whom I expected to marry when I was young like you. You know, dear, Robert Sage died suddenly the week before our wedding would have been. We had planned it for Easter week, and I have always kept Easter very sacredly for his sake, as well as for the reason that it is the holiest day in all the year. Yes, I may as well tell you that I have founded a scholarship in Robert's memory, and that his uncle is managing it for me—the business part, I mean."

"This is all very lovely," said Marjorie with firmness, "and yet, dear cousin, there is another side. Miss Eldridge will be the poorer if you withdraw your custom from her, and Miss Saunders will not know what to make of it if you never have any more new dresses."

Just then there was an interruption. The door opened softly and a little figure in white with a night-gown trailing on the floor, came shyly in. "I can't go to sleep," said little Jessie, "and I want to come down here and say my prayers. I'm lonesome up there with nobody but God. Please let me stay with you."

Miss Pamela gathered the little thing closely in her arms. "I am not a poor woman," she said, with a smile and a blush as she looked at Marjorie, "and at this minute I believe I am younger than you. I believe, too, that you are right. Something is springing up in my heart that means new life and new love. It is as if something buried long ago has begun to bud and flower. I am going to be fair to everybody, and tomorrow morning you and I, Marjorie, and little Jessie, too, will all of us set about getting our spring wardrobe. Nature puts on fresh clothing at Easter, why shouldn't we?"

TOM HARTWELL'S WAY

WHEN they came home from the funeral of Tom's father, Mrs. Hartwell and the children sat down to supper, alone for the first time in a week. During the days of Mr. Hartwell's illness, neighbors had been coming and going, and the excitement had been intense; the whole thing, his breaking-down without warning, the fierce fever and the heart failure at last, had been so sudden and so sweeping, like thunder out of a clear sky, like a cyclone coming in fury, that there had been no time for thought or fear. Then the funeral had brought relatives. Aunt Jane and her boys from West Chester, Uncle Charley and his wife from Boston, Lewis Bond and his sister, second cousins from New York. All these had taken their leave at once after the burial, and the widow and her son and daughters came back to look their poverty and desolation in the face. Mr. Hartwell had never had a large income, but his salary had sufficed for the needs of his family. They had not known how to save, and the utmost they had been able to do was to keep out of debt. Mrs. Hartwell was not only broken-hearted with grief, but in despair at the thought of the future.

She undressed her little Jessie and Frances, put them to bed, and then came back to Tom, sitting forlornly by the lamp with his books.

Mrs. Hartwell came over to him, put her arms around his neck, and broke down in a tempest of weeping.

"Mother, mother, mother!" cried Tom, at his wit's end, "dear mother, don't cry so, don't!"

He tried his best to comfort her. After awhile she dried her eyes and said:

"Do you know, Tom, dear, that we are just as poor as we can be, that we cannot live any longer in this house, that I don't know where our bread is to come from? All I do know is that the Lord will not forsake your father's children."

She said this very solemnly and Tom felt awed. It was almost as if there were an invisible Presence in the room

"I can make fancy cakes and confectionery, I can keep house, I can sew, I cannot do anything else; and you, Tom, are too young to earn much. The little girls are mere babies yet and must be taken care of."

Tom looked up. He seemed somehow taller and older than he had been an hour ago. He took the books, laid them on the shelf, and said to his mother:

"I will be the man of the house, mother dear. We will pray and work. The Lord will provide. That is what father always said."

They knelt down together, and said their nightly prayer, and then they went to bed. The tired out, sorrowing wife slept. They had not three dollars in the house, and winter was coming.

Early in the morning Tom rose, made a fire in the stove, swept the kitchen, set the table and ground the coffee. Its pleasant aroma was diffused through the house when his mother and the little girls came down. As they sat down to breakfast the postman's whistle sounded and a letter was handed to Mrs. Hartwell.

As she opened it a crisp new bill for fifty dollars dropped to the floor. Tom picked it up and his mother read aloud:

"DEAR MADAM: Your late husband was honored and beloved by all his associates in the bank; we have ventured thus to lay our flowers on his grave, in the hope that you will appreciate our motive, and believe in the depth of our mourning and our sympathy with you in this hour.

Mr. Hartwell, we think, would like this better than a sheaf of perishing lilies or a mound of fading roses.

"Very faithfully yours."

And then followed a long list of names.

"Did I not tell you, mother, the Lord would provide?" said Tom.

The day passed slowly and strangely, but there was much to do. Now and then a neighbor called for a few moments. At noon a carriage stopped at the door, and a man alighted and left a large covered basket for Mrs. Hartwell, with Mrs. Murray's kind regards. It contained a turkey beautifully roasted, a mould of cranberry jelly, mashed potatoes, turnips, bread, butter, and a mince pie, a delicious dinner ready for the table. As they rose from the meal, the postman came again, bringing another letter. This time it was from a lawyer in New York, an old friend of Mr. Hartwell. The writer said: "I know something of the state of affairs when death comes suddenly, and of the many expenses which throng at such a time. Will you accept for your husband's sake the trifle I enclose?"

It was a check for one hundred dollars. Mrs. Hartwell knelt down and thanked God. With the money thus put in her hands, she proceeded to carry out a little scheme. She bought flour, sugar, butter and eggs, and began to make delicate cakes for women in the town who did not understand the art, or were too busy to make cake, for traveler's luncheons, for picnics, weddings and church-fairs. Her small beginning was very modest and involved no special risk. Tom took a basket on his arm, delivered the goods, and went about to solicit orders. In the evening, and when he had a moment to spare, he pegged away at his studies.

One day he returned from a round of delivery with a flushed face and an air of resolution.

"Mother," he said, "Judge Arnold's wife is ill, and the nurse has gone away. The children are neglected, and the

judge says he will give anybody twenty dollars a month who will take care of them from eight o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock at night. Could not I take the job?"

"You, Tom!"

"I have thought it all out. You have Carrie [a little maid who had been taken from a Home] to help you with the baking, and she could carry the cakes home as well and as safely as I do. The twenty dollars would be clear gain."

"But, my dear boy, nursing is work for girls. People may make fun of you if they see you wheeling a baby carriage."

Tom drew himself up and held his head high. 'I don't care who makes fun of me, mother, if I know I am doing right."

"It will be hard work," said the mother, "but I cannot withhold my consent. This is a very difficult place for Mrs. Arnold to find the right kind of help in, and I know you will be kind to the little ones, even if you have not much experience."

For several weeks the high-school boys were disposed to smile, but there is a great deal in taking a firm stand, and when they found that their laughter did not annoy Tom, it soon ceased. One lad, a leader among them, declared that he liked Hartwell's pluck. It took real sand, he added, to do that sort of work.

"That is a very dear boy," said the judge's wife months after, when she was able to go about again, and Tom was no longer needed. "He did everything for my babies as deftly as a woman could and with twice the conscience."

"He is a Christian soldier, mamma," said little Robert, gravely.

"I have studied Tom Hartwell," said the judge. "There is rare good stuff in him and I shall take him into my office and give him a lift. If Tom Hartwell wants to study law, I will see that he has an opportunity."

Thomas Hartwell is today a practicing attorney. He made his way through college after a while and studied law with Judge Arnold. He is more than a lawyer; he is a thorough-going, earnest, sincere Christian, one who is in the forefront of every noble Christian endeavor. His mother no longer has to bake her little cakes. Tom can take care of her. The Lord never goes back on his own.

A PRODIGAL SON

CHAPTER I

THE fire on the hearth leaped and glowed, for the evening was chilly, and its pleasant warmth was very welcome. On the table, spread for supper, were biscuits smoking from the oven, a cold roast chicken, a plate of ham thinly sliced, honey, cake, preserves and pickles, and the fragrant aroma of coffee filled the house. The little maid stood behind her mistress' chair, ready to wait on the family after grace had been said, and there was a general air of comfort and festivity about the room and the board. Only, beside Mrs. McDermott's place, at her right hand, there was a vacant chair.

For five years the table had been set every day, with a chair placed for Dave, his plate, his napkin, his knife and fork, just as if he might at any moment come in, and with a merry laugh and a kiss for his little mother, be again the life of the household. For five years his room upstairs had been scrupulously kept in waiting for him, every appointment of the bed and the bureau as he liked them to be, and on any night he would have found a light burning to receive him. In that five years, his mother's face had grown more deeply lined, and her dark hair had become frosted with silver, and her voice had gathered that intensity of vibration, which comes of keeping back one's tears. "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" was the question in the dark background of every hour and day, and never, for an instant, was the tension of anxiety relaxed.

At first, when Dave disappeared, there was the weary following up of clues in every direction; the mother had

gone to hospitals, to prisons, to Blackwell's Island, to the morgue. She had gazed into the sodden features of drowned men; she had looked into ghastly countenances of men stabbed in cruel saloon fights. There was no reason for flight, that any one knew of, at first. After a little, the mother learned that her boy had not left an altogether clean record. She sold part of her patrimony, and paid up Dave's indebtedness to the uttermost farthing. To others, he was Dave Sears, a good, but rather weak fellow, easily led, disposed to bad company, cross and dangerous when drunk, and Dave had been drunk more than once in the last year of his stay at home. But he was never cross with his mother, and, strange as it may seem, she, poor thing, did not know intoxication for the gruesome and vile possession it is, even when she saw it. She was mercifully blinded for a long time. When David went away, he was more to her, in her idolatrous love, than John, who had never given her an uneasy moment; than Robert, who was the mainstay of her house, or than Elizabeth, her only and tenderly loving daughter. Her youngest child, born after his father's death, there had been no limit whatever either to her love for him or her foolish indulgence of his every whim.

"I wish mother would not put that chair at the table," said Robert one day. "The sight of it keeps her morbid."

"Oh, Bob," answered Elizabeth, "don't say one word. It would break her heart to put it away. Every morning of her life she rises with the feeling that David may come home today. She has not given him up. She is sure she will yet see him. Her present thought is that he has gone to the Klondike. Don't disturb her by so much as a hint, Bob."

"Of course I won't. What do you take me for? But, all the same, it is very unwise. I believe Dave is alive, and ashamed to come back, and maybe we'd be ashamed to have him."

"Don't say that, brother. Mother and I are praying for him. I would never be ashamed of my own flesh and blood—never—nor would you. Poor Dave would be a splendid fellow if he could let drink alone. It was social pleasure that tempted him at first. You know how much he was sought after for his brightness and cleverness and his gay wit. Poor Dave!'

Robert assented, but unsmilingly. It was a sore point with him that this prodigal should monopolize so much yearning affection from his mother and sister. He knew how to sympathize with the elder brother in the parable, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Others might not understand this character and might call this man a churl; not so Robert; in his heart he approved of his position, and thought the prodigal, returning from the far country, had received better treatment than he deserved.

But it was only to Elizabeth that he grumbled, never to his mother, for he worshipped the ground she walked on, and would cheerfully have been trampled on by her little foot to have had the sort of love she lavished on the reprobate absentee brother. In truth, she did appreciate Robert, though he often antagonized her by his brusque manner and curt speech, and she did full justice to his good qualities; but here he was, well fed, well dressed, well groomed and comfortable, with a fine position and a liberal salary. Robert was an object of envy, not of compassion. John, the quiet, scholarly brother, was also well to do; and Elizabeth, who sat in a pretty studio and made artistic photographs and modelled in clay, needed no mother pity. But Dave—Dave—Dave.

Sometimes Mrs. Sears could not stand it in the house for thinking of him. It made her fairly wild. Then she would slip on her hat and coat and walk, walk the streets, up and down, to and fro, till the exercise tired her and the

air brought her calmness. And pray? Only God knows how mothers pray, beating the throne itself with their clenched fists, crying out in their agony, forgetting to say, "Thy will be done," till some gentle, watching angel, sent to strengthen them, whispers it in their weary ear, and Christ himself comes to soothe and sustain them. If Hannah, praying God to send her a child, prayed in bitterness of soul, the mothers of the ages, praying for God-sent children gone astray, have far exceeded her. And God answers their petitions, though there are times when the answer is delayed, and though often it comes in a different form from the one they crave and expect.

Mrs. Sears pictured Dave in every depth of destitution of which she could, from her limited knowledge, make an image. But in her most exaggerated dreams she did not realize him as he had become.

As they sat at supper, with the firelight dancing and the lamp lit, and John gravely talking, and Elizabeth flashing a smiling look at him across the table, what would the mother have thought had she known that just outside the window, clinging to the railings, staring in through a crack in the shutters with hungry eyes, was a gaunt, wolf-like man, his threadbare coat buttoned over a collarless neck, his old shoes covering stockingless feet, his matted hair and unkempt beard clinging to a head and face as repulsive as those of the lowest tramp on the roadside. Once, twice, thrice his irresolute hand moved to ring the doorbell, for he saw the empty chair and knew what it meant, but something seemed to pull him back. Robert's clean respectability, Elizabeth's pretty evening frock, his mother's dainty laces, all repelled him.

"They are in heaven," he murmured, "and I—oh, my God!—am in hell!" He left the stoop, stumbled down the basement area steps and knocked at the lower door. When the cook came, a big Irish woman with a soft heart for a famished man, he humbly asked her for something to eat,

and she brought him a plate full of food and a cup of steaming coffee, and he sat on the lowest step and ate and drank, and when he had finished to the last drop and the last crumb he got up and crept away, leaving platter and cup beside the door, on the mat, and saying "Thank you" in grateful tones as Irish Mary took them from their place. By this time he was again on the sidewalk, and the cook, struck by a lingering refinement in his voice, sent a blessing after him:

"The saints protect yez, poor bye; yez have seen better days."

Once more he mounted the stoop and looked in on Paradise, but now a rough hand was laid on his arm and a policeman gruffly bade him get a move on him, "You've been around here long enough."

The old policeman had grown stouter and grayer since Dave's absence, but Dave knew him. He turned and looked McIntyre in the eye.

"Don't worry, old man! Don t you know David Sears?"

The rain had begun to fall, and the wind was rising. Elizabeth, seeing nothing of what was going on outside, came to the window and drew the curtains. Then she went to the piano. Faintly to the ears of the men outside came the sound of her silvery voice singing.

"I must get away from here, Mac. I can't listen to her singing. I'm going away—don't keep me," for the policeman was holding fast to him, not roughly now, but lovingly, for he had known Dave from his sunny childhood.

"But, Dave, where would you go, your mother'll take you in?"

"Take in a fiend from hell, and introduce him there! Man, I'm not fit for it. I didn't mean to let her see me, I tell you. I didn't mean to come near the house, but I found myself here before I knew it. I came as if I had walked in my sleep! No, McIntyre, I'm going off, and she must not know I'm alive. For the love of God, McIntyre, don't breathe it to her."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I don't know—maybe drown myself—maybe go to the place where I belong with the father of lies."

"Faith, if you've no better plan than that, I'll arrist ye before I'll let you go to the river. I'll tell ye something better. Return to your mother, and confess your sin, and make a new start!"

"No, McIntyre, if ever I come back, I'll come as a man should, in open day, not skulking like a vagabond. Sometime I hope I can turn a new leaf. I don't know. I'll not take my life, old friend—no, and I'll not take that dollar. Put it back in your pocket. Shake hands and wish me luck, and promise me, as you fear God, you'll keep my secret. Tell nobody you've seen me, John McIntyre, for the love of heaven."

"I'll promise you, David, but come back, boy, come back all right. May God bless you, my boy."

Dave disappeared in the black night, and the policeman tramped sturdily on his beat.

CHAPTER II

Barefooted, bareheaded, clothed in rags and tatters, and with the grime and dirt of a long tramp visible in his thin face, and slouching figure, Dave Sears stood at the door of a Dakota farmhouse. The man of the house looked him over, heard him ask for work, considered. He had a shrewd but not a hard expression, this Western farmer.

"You've seen hard times, my friend," he said at last. "Will you work if I give it to you? I'm too poor to pay you wages just now, but I'll give you a home till you get into better shape. If you'll close with that offer, come right in."

"I'll close with that offer, gratefully, sir. It's years since I've had a home."

"Mother!" called the farmer. A sallow-faced woman, wrinkled and brown, but with pleasant eyes and a kind look, came to the door with a skillet in her hand. She was getting a meal and something was in the oven. Dave smelled it.

"Here's a young man I've engaged to help on the farm. Can we take him in? And make him one of us?"

"That we can," she said, cheerily. "The first thing, honey, will be to give you a place to wash, and the next you must have a square meal; you look fairly beat out. I'm glad you've happened along. Father's been needing a hand the worst way, but we're poor, and we can't hire help. I felt sure, though, that the Lord would send us a man, and he's done it. The Lord never went back on Jim and me, and he won't do it now."

She indicated a basin at the back leanto, and handed him a clean towel.

"There's soap there," she said. "And when dinner's over you can go to the loft, and you'll find a good bed, and have the place to yourself. Jim and I sleep downstairs. We're all alone; have been for six years, since our baby died."

They sat down to a good dinner—boiled corned beef and cabbage, potatoes, apple sauce. It was plain that there was plenty of it. The tramp had not tasted such fare nor sat at such a table for many months. Before the first mouthful was taken the farmer bowed his head and said reverently:

"Bless, O Lord, this refreshment to our use, and us to thy service. Bless, O Lord, the friend within our gates, and grant us thy peace. For Christ's sake. Amen."

In that Amen Dave Sears joined.

The work was hard, but he went at it with a will. After the desultory life he had led, his muscles were weak, and

he had very little facility; but he tried with all his might. It was so good to be clean, to have whole clean clothes on, for the farmer's wife found an old coarse suit of her husband's and burned the remnants that Dave had on when he came; it was so comfortable to have three meals a day. Only, after a fortnight, the demon within him, quiescent for a time, awoke and clamored and tugged and tore at him, even as in our Lord's day the demons rent their poor victims. He was beside himself with restlessness.

"Dave," said the keen-eyed farmer, watching him intently, "you've been a drinking man, I see."

"I have," said Dave.

"And the desire for the cursed stuff is in ye now. Well, my lad, there's not a drop of it to be had here, nor within five miles of this house, and if you will ask the Lord's help, he and you and I will fight the thing together, and I'll bet on the Lord Jesus and Jim Burnham against you and whiskey. What do you say? Will you try it?"

"I hate the stuff as I hate poison, Mr. Burnham. It's ruined me, body and soul. It's broken my mother's heart. It's killed my career. I'm what I am because of it, but I'm afraid it's too strong for me!"

"Certainly it's too strong for you! But nothing can frustrate God. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Down on your knees here in the furrow, and we'll pray against the whiskey, and for the man he means you to be."

To the end of his life David Sears will remember Mr. Burnham's prayer that day. Above them the blue sky, around them the wide, treeless fields, standing near the patient, uncomprehending mules. God does not turn a deaf ear to such a cry for help. David rose ready to take the first step toward a new manhood.

"It's time to go home," said the farmer. "Mother's got an extra good dinner for us today."

So she had; and the coffee she made for David was extra strong and hot. She took a hand, too, on the side of

the Lord Jesus and Jim Burnham. It was the sword of the Lord and of Gideon over again, and the battle they waged was for a man's deliverance from the bondage of a cruel appetite.

"They've started a Sunday school at the Corners," said the farmer one Sunday morning, and I suppose 'twouldn't hurt us to ride over and help them. What say, David?"

"I can't be any help that I know of."

"Well, you can't hinder things. Lend a hand—won't you, my boy?"

But David held back. It required some persuasion to get him started. Mrs. Burnham did it. She laid her hand on his forehead; it was a broad, smooth brow, winning and clear, now that his hair was cut and parted in the middle, as his mother used to comb it.

"Come, Davy," she said, "you and I can lead the singin'."

"If I had shoes," he answered falteringly.

"Oh! if that's all," she replied, "I can fix you up. When my Cousin Reuben was here visiting, he left a good pair of shoes—land o' Goshen, he left a lot of clothes an' I forgot them, for they didn't fit father. You can have them, Dave, as well as not. Reuben's never coming back after them." So he was fitted out in comfort.

A home missionary, one of those heroes of the faith who count not their lives dear for the sake of the Gospel, took the lonely district as part of his parish. He gave a cordial welcome to Dave, and Mr. Burnham and himself were already acquainted. The minister was about Dave's age, and he at once recognized in the man one who had been educated, and had possessed some early advantages. He did not need to be told much of the past; living in that community he had met more than a few who had left the East and cut loose from old associations, either because they were discouraged or dissipated, or unable to hold their own. There was a winning quality in Dave's manner, and, now

that he had found friends, and was assured of assistance, there was in him a new confidence, which was very pleasing. The missionary liked him from the start, and gave him the cordial hand of a comrade.

"I tell you, Mr. ———," he hesitated.

"Call me Dave, if you please. Never mind my other name."

"Dave, then, let it be. A fellow, I was going to say, needs friends in this world, and there's one Friend he can't be without. Dave, do you know the Lord?"

"I know about him, Mr. Elmore."

"That's good. But you've got to go farther. You've got to know him. Then you'll be safe, and strong, and sure to go ahead all right. Dave, I must have you for Jesus."

The two had many talks. The weeks wore away, season followed season, still Dave, earning no money, but climbing back bit by bit, step by step, to a clean, brave manhood, remained in the Burnham home and worked as if he had been their own son.

"He's left a good mother somewhere," said Mrs. Burnham. "I wish she knew how he's getting on. But he's as close as a clam. He never mentions his people."

"Give him time, dear," the farmer would answer. "He's safer here, for a while, and he's stepping to the light. He'll never be really safe till he comes out on the Lord's side, 'till he's washed and made whole."

From the barn came the sound of Dave's singing as he went about his evening chores:

"I've found a Friend, oh! such a friend!
He loved me ere I knew him."

"Maybe he's yielded all to Jesus now. I must run out and ask him."

She came back with a shining face.

"Yes, Jim, the Lord's opened his eyes. Dave's a new man in Christ Jesus. Praise the Lord!"

. . . . . .

"Dave!" It was the minister calling from the gate.

"I'm coming," shouted Dave.

"I want you to drive to the postoffice with me. I've heard that a box of books has been sent from New York, and it will be a Godsend. We're just starved for something to read, and from what I've heard, this is a nice lot of volumes for everybody. Let me read you what Dr. Ebbenhurst writes."

"But," looking attentively at him, "something has happened to you, my friend. What is it? I never saw you so glad before!'

David answered him solemnly, "I have reason to be glad. I've surrendered to your Saviour. Henceforth he is my Master and my Friend, and by his grace I'll serve him, better than I've served the Devil, as sure as my name is David Sears."

CHAPTER III

"Elizabeth Sears. From her brother David. January 1, 18—."

The books had been unpacked, and as the cover came off the box, Mrs. Burnham had sung the doxology, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!" Jim Burnham, his face alight with eager joy, had handled book after book; the minister had said a word of prayer over them—for oh! the untold good they would do in the simple households, barren of intellectual food, to which they were going like veritable messengers from above. They were for children and grown folks alike. Some were especially designed for the minister; some were stories; others travels, and books of biography were not wanting. Over a child's picture-book David lingered longest, finally burying his head in his hands, and breaking into hard and painful sobs. The three gathered around him.

"Why, Dave—Davy!" remonstrated Mrs. Burnham. Then she saw the title-page of the little book, the round careful childish script, the boy's present to his sister. The very sight of it had opened the floodgates of memory, and carried the young man, as nothing else could, back to the days of his sweet innocence and blessedness, when he was still a little child at home. He calmed himself by a great effort.

"I gave Elizabeth that book the year I was eight and she was ten. She must be dead, mother must be dead, or else they never would have let the book go. I went with mother to buy it for her." He broke down again.

"David," said the minister, "I don't see this as you do. The little book, I fancy, was sent forth at a venture into the world's wide desert, as Noah's dove was sent out of the ark. I feel sure your mother is alive and longing for you, and that your sister sent this book in the box, thinking that, among the thousand possibilities of life, it might get to your hands, as it has. David Sears, write to your mother this night."

"I vowed never to go home penniless and a burden," said David, slowly.

"You are not a burden," answered Mr. Burnham, "and from this time on you shall not be penniless. I will pay you wages. Others who can afford it will be very glad to pay you more than I. But this isn't the question, David. You are not Satan's bond slave any longer; you are Christ's freedman. Your mother should know the good news. Think; she does not even know you are living."

"It's hard enough," Mrs. Burnham added, "for me to go to my boy's grave and plant flowers on it, and think how he lies under the sod asleep; but it would have been harder had he grown up and got lost, and gone off where I couldn't find him."

"David," said the minister, "I don't know under what provocation, or fear, or sin, you left your home, but I'm

sure your duty is plain. Write to the old folks and let them know."

"There are mother and Elizabeth and my brothers. Father died before I was born."

"Then he sees you from above, and knows all about it. Maybe God allowed him to be the guiding angel who brought you here. Who knows? But write to your mother, David, and we'll drive to the postoffice and send the letter off tonight."

The prodigal did not go home, but home came to the prodigal. As swiftly as steam could bring them, traveling by night and by day, the mother and Elizabeth were whirled across the great continent, never stopping nor resting until the mother's arms were around her boy, her head gathered to his breast. The two women arrived in the twilight one evening, and they thought they had never known silence and remoteness till they drove mile after mile from the station and found at last Mr. Burnham's far-off homestead. They remained that night, and were made as comfortable as Mrs. Burnham's means would allow, and the next morning the minister came and told them he would escort them to a house where they could find board.

"You will go home with us, my boy?" said Mrs. Sears, pleadingly.

"Mother, darling"—the boy's voice was very low, but it had an accent of firmness new to it—"I cannot go to New York yet. My place is here. Here I have begun a new life. Till I am stronger, I must stay away from my old associations. Then, too, I must earn enough to pay up what you paid for me. Drink made me a brute; it made me a thief. I must wait. One of these days I will come home, but not yet."

The mother's heart ached, yet she knew David was right. She urged him no more, but her worn face was sweet with a great illumination when Elizabeth said, as firmly as David himself: "I shall take you home, dearest

mother, and then I'll come back and stay with David. We'll have a little cabin here together, and I'll take care of him for you. No, brother, you need not oppose me. I shall carry out my plan. I have always had my own way, and you must not be the first to break into the established order of things."

"Mother, I must tell you every single thing," said her boy at last. "I was once on the very doorstep, and I could not go in. Mary gave me something to eat from the kitchen table. You mustn't cry, mother," for at these tidings Mrs. Sears was overwhelmed; her tears flowed.

"Then," said Elizabeth, "I know the night. It was a year ago. We felt there was something unusual. We looked up and down the street, but nobody was there except old McIntyre, and, when I said to him that he kept faithful watch, he said: 'Aye, aye, Miss Elizabeth; but the angels keeps faithfuller.' He's a queer old fellow."

David did not betray McIntyre.

His mother did not rest until she had sent to the nearest town and procured for him what she thought a decent amount of wearing apparel—underclothing, stockings, trousers, coats, shoes, hats—all a man could wish; and since neither money nor clothing could be offered to Mr. Burnham, she sent for the two articles his wife had most eagerly craved—a cabinet organ and a sewing machine—and the Burnhams were as pleased as two children when these helps to family life arrived and were set in their places.

Elizabeth fulfilled her intention. She escorted her mother home, but she came flying back, and for two years there was nothing that a farmer's wife needed to do which a farmer's sister did not learn. She had a pony, and soon the widely scattered neighbors grew accustomed to the sight of her speeding about on its back; she taught in the little Sunday school, cheering and comforting everyone.

"Sister," said her brother at last, "I think we will go

home to our mother, I can trust God to keep me now, and I feel that I can do more for Him there than here. Besides, mother wants us; she misses you; she needs me. Let us turn our backs on Dakota, and do Christ's work in New York."

Elizabeth hesitated; she blushed; she was about to speak, but Dave did not notice any confusion. Having resolved to go, he was impatient to be in motion.

"I will go with you, dear," she said. "It will be a joyful home-going. And I do want to see my mother."

But long after the fatted calf had been killed, and the great delight of the home-returned prodigal was over, long after they had grown used to seeing David in the vacant chair, and to hearing him whistle and sing about the house, Elizabeth was observed to feel a peculiar interest in the visits of the postman. Thick letters came to her weekly, and she spent much time in writing, and one day there was much bustle in the house, for a friend was expected, a real guest of honor.

"Dear," said the mother, "I never expected to see you marry a minister, much less a home missionary."

"The unexpected is always happening, mamsie."

"If you could have chosen somebody at home!"

"There wasn't the right somebody here, mother. There couldn't have been any other somebody half so good."

David smiled. As the soul of another David had been knit to the soul of Jonathan, was his to his Dakota comrade and brother. It seemed to him a beautiful circumstance, that his sister should marry his dearest friend.

MOLLY'S CHANGE OF SCENE

"THERE isn't a thing tempts her, Norah."

"Couldn't she eat the broiled chicken I brought her mother, nor the jelly?"

"She just picked at them; that's all. She's that listless, dearie, that she'll take no interest. The doctor says she does be needin' a change; but what change can we give her?"

"If she'd only brace up, mother!"

"Yes, that's what your father says. He's got no patience with Molly. He says I've spoiled her, and maybe I have; but since she left the high school and couldn't go to college, Molly's been more dead than alive. The only thing ever she wanted was education, an' I tried to get it for her, God knows—and she so clever, too—but it couldn't be managed. Then she had that fall, the first day in the factory, and since then she doesn't care what 'comes of her. I'd give a year of my life to help the child. It's a heartbreak to see her fading away; but what can I do? She's thin as a ghost now."

Tears came into Norah's eyes. She was big and homely, with coarse, red hands, and the strength of an ox. She tossed off her work in the laundry at the beautiful big house where she lived, as if washing were merely blowing soap-bubbles. It was child's play to her, and her merry laugh rang out over the tubs, and her jests almost set the cook and housemaid into fits as she hung out the clothes, or brought in great baskets of them to be sprinkled and rolled up for the ironing.

The one bit of poetry in Norah's life was her delicate sister Molly, the youngest of her mother's nine children,

the one who had been coddled from babyhood, and who was pining away because she could not do as she wanted to, and had to take up a life she loathed, and there was no chance to get her the change that would save her.

Poor girls have no business with nervous exhaustion. Molly had come honestly by hers. At the high school she had not only worked far beyond her strength, but she had been worn out in the effort to conceal her people and her poverty from her schoolmates. Her simple dresses were few enough, but they were as nice as those the others wore; and at graduation, somehow, she had contrived to have as dainty a white gown and as beautiful ribbons as any one else. Norah had seen to that. The old mother and father and Norah had modestly kept in the background on commencement night.

Little did her parents dream that she was so desperately ashamed of them, that she wouldn't for the whole world have had the girls know that she belonged to them. With infinite pains she had avoided intimacies, and kept to herself, lest the class should suspect her of any connection with Pat Montgomery, who drove a truck for the woollen mill.

Once when a heavy rain had come up suddenly, her mother had ventured to bring her an umbrella and overshoes to the school, Molly had taken them with a brief thank you, and had not explained when one of the girls said: "Well, Molly, you are fortunate. Our Bridget would not condescend to bring my rain-coat or umbrella, if it were to save me from consumption."

When Patrick put down his big foot at last that Molly must earn her living like the rest, that she might learn the typewriter, or go into a shop, or into the mill, being in his view no better than other girls, and the pressure of his long struggle having begun to tell on his health and strength, Molly collapsed. She thought she should die. She slipped on the factory floor and was badly hurt. Not badly enough, though, to account for her going to pieces

as she did. Patrick was angry with her; his wife was broken-hearted; the big brothers were puzzled and pitiful, and Norah came over evenings and coaxed and consoled, all to no purpose.

Molly sat all day long in a rocking-chair, moping and languid, looking like a broken lily. Now the doctor said she must have a change. Norah went home disconsolate.

Two days later, Norah came back, bursting into the little house like a whirlwind, in the middle of the morning.

"Mother," she said, "Molly can have a change. The family's all off to Europe, the servants are gone, and I'm left to be caretaker. I'll take the child to stay with me. She'll be a different girl after eight weeks at The Birches: you see if she isn't."

"But, Norah, would your lady be willing?"

"I asked her, and she said, 'Yes, certainly.' You see they've gone in a hurry. It wasn't thought of till two days ago. And I'm in sole charge."

Hurriedly Molly's things were thrown into a suitcase, a cab was summoned, and Norah hustled her sister away to the great house where she had spent the last six years, a trusted and efficient helper. Little did the owners of The Birches imagine that Norah had taken leave of her conscience and was now about to prove it, by an act that seemed in her view justifiable. She meant to save Molly's life, and she thought Providence had shown her the way.

Molly leaned back in the cab and languidly dropped her eyes, until they had turned in at the stone gates of the avenue that led to the house. The ascent was steep but well graded, and the driver stopped several times to rest his horse on the way up. He drove around to the back, and Norah paid his fare, and, unlocking the kitchen door, brought Molly inside.

"Come with me, sweetheart," she said. "I've your room all ready and waiting."

It was not to the part of the house where Nora slept

that she conducted Molly. She piloted her up the broad polished stairs, her strong arm half lifting her.

"You'll have this room, darlin'," she said.

But Molly was aroused at this.

"Why, Norah, what do you mean? I can't stay in this room. It's a guest chamber."

"Well, what if it is? It's not exactly a guest-chamber. It's Miss Emily's room, and she's away for a year. You'll do it no harm, and it'll do you good, and there's only our two selves in the house, and we'll have no more words. Miss Emily's always wantin' to help the poor, so I'm givin' her a chance; that's the whole of it."

Miss Emily's room was the prettiest that Molly had ever seen. She realized the enormity of her being in it when the owner was absent, but the temptation had come on her suddenly, and she thought there would be no harm in staying there just one day. For the great, beautiful room was flooded with sunshine. A soft carpet like green moss covered the floor. The bedstead was of shining brass; the furnishing was all white and gold. Books were in the cases and on hanging shelves. Exquisite pictures were on the walls. One sunk into the depths of the chairs. There was a desk with paper and pens, a divan heaped with cushions, and a bathroom tiled with white and gleaming with silver fittings. Molly Montgomery drew a deep breath of delight.

This was her element. Here was where she belonged. For the first time in weeks she held herself erect and surveyed her slender figure in the long pier-glass.

Norah brought her luncheon on a tray covered with a white napkin, and she ate with enjoyment, sitting beside an open window looking down on a rose-garden.

"But, Norah, you are all wrong. I can't stay here. Why did we have to be poor, Norah, and daddy so common, and everybody so mean?"

But here Norah's quick Irish temper took fire.

"The good Lord forgive you, Molly, for daring to call your father common. It's common you are to have the black thought! I'm sure you'll meet misfortune running your way with a bow if you don't mend your manners. There, honey, there!" as she saw Molly flush and then turn pale, "never mind, we've spoiled you among us and that's the truth."

A week passed, flying swiftly, and Molly had lost her delicate appetite and gained the look of health. She slept in the big, beautiful room, in the luxurious bed, between sheets of fine linen; she read Miss Emily's books, she walked in the rose-garden and felt herself to be an enchanted princess. Norah waited on her, hand and foot, in the intervals of keeping the house aired and clean. The men who came on errands supposed Molly to be a relative of Norah.

One day, never to be forgotten by her later, she carried out the idea of the enchanted princess more fully. Miss Emily's closets were empty, but there was a chest in the room which Molly had the curiosity to open. It proved to be filled with exquisitely embroidered garments, some white, others softly tinted. Yielding to an impulse, Molly dressed herself in the pretty clothes, finishing with a kimona in faint blue, with shadowy roses straying over it.

She surveyed herself in the glass with pride. She was a vision of beauty with her black hair in a heavy coil, her deep blue eyes, her graceful, girlish figure. She meant only to look and then put away the borrowed finery, when her heart stood still.

In the mirror she saw, entering the doorway, some one she knew. A short, stout figure, with hair turning gray; a severe person in a plain black dress, who advanced, exclaiming: "Why, Molly Montgomery! What on earth are you doing here in my Cousin Emily's room, and in her kimona?"

If the floor could have opened and swallowed her, Molly

would have been grateful. She turned so white and faint that she would have fallen had she not clutched at the back of the nearest chair. For this lady was no less a personage than the principal of the high school, a woman whose keen eyes penetrated every disguise, and whom no girl could hope to deceive. But Norah flew to the rescue.

"An' is it you, dear Miss Prentiss? Sure, herself told me you might come and stay with me while she was away, an' I was to take good care of you. This is my sister Molly, that's staying here to help while the family's gone. Molly, how did you dare touch Miss Emily's things? How did you dare? Take them off directly, and come to the kitchen, where you belong."

Molly was now between two fires. Miss Prentiss, on the one side, continued surveying her in silence, with an expression of withering scorn. On the other, Norah stood a picture of agonized entreaty. Presently her countenance cleared.

"Norah, dear," she said, "please leave me with Miss Prentiss."

Norah went down stairs wringing her hands.

Molly poured out the whole tale, and Miss Prentiss listened in wonder, patience and sympathy. Molly kept nothing back, and did not spare herself. When she had finished, Miss Prentiss spoke.

"Well, my dear, you have behaved very badly. I had hoped to help you to win a scholarship in Hartwell College next year, and to carry out your plans. You see, I knew your good father and mother and esteemed them highly. The only thing I doubted you for was because you were capable of feeling ashamed of them. Now, will you do precisely what I bid you?"

"Yes," the answer came in almost a whisper.

"Write down in a few words an apology to Emily for your invasion of her room, and give it to me. Then go to work and relieve Norah of some of her care. If you still

wish to study I will give you a little help, and see about college, provided we are done with false shame."

The statement was written and given to Miss Prentiss. But Emily never heard of it, nor saw a line of it. Miss Prentiss burned it one rainy evening when she had a bit of fire on the hearth. Molly had her wish. She went to college, and in time became a teacher. When that time came, she had learned to know the difference between real things and shams.

ON THE MASTER'S SERVICE

DEACON BALDWIN, coming out of church on a Sabbath evening, when the pews were thinly filled, nudged Deacon Simpson on the shoulder. "Stop in a minute or two on your way home," he said.

The second deacon nodded. "I'll just leave Marthy in the house," he answered, "and I'll be 'round."

Both deacons were elderly men, the one tall, spare, and grizzled; the other, round, rosy and baldheaded. They had been boys together, and for years had run the affairs of the Black Hill township and the Black Hill church. Nothing went there except as Deacon Baldwin moved and Deacon Simpson seconded it, and the two had sometimes the air of conspirators as they planned, not to say "plotted," together for the best interests of their neighbors. At present the senior deacon was in a mood which might well be called disgruntled. He did not like his pastor, and thought that the church was not being carried on according to business principles, and the present desire uppermost in his mind was to induce Mr. Bancroft to resign—"peaceably, if we can; forcibly, if we must," he said to himself, as he weeded his garden, or weighed out sugar and butter for his customers at the country store. "The church doesn't grow." He wagged his head solemnly and thrust out the tip of his tongue a little way, as was his habit when he spoke with conviction.

"Yes, brother," replied Deacon Simpson; "but then the question is, how is it tew grow in a place like Black Hill? We've got all the town there is, seems to me."

"We'd ought to draw in the young people from Topping Centre and Windy Heights. Moonlight nights, there'd

ought to be courtin' couples drivin' in from ten miles round. Mr. Bancroft just jogs on; he don't announce novelties, and the people demand novelties nowadays."

"Seems to me we can't do much while his salary ain't paid up," said Deacon Simpson, anxiously. "We owe him three months now, and winter's coming in, and he can't leave till we've settled accounts."

"Who's talking about his leaving?" said Deacon Baldwin, shifting his ground. "A successful man never has any trouble about salary—the salary's there. The pews bring it in, an' the collections. Mr. Bancroft's got no grit, or he'd get his salary. Did I ever tell you about the time I went to Elsmore to visit my wife's second cousin, and the way the preacher took up the collection that day? No? Then I'll tell you now, Aaron Simpson, and you'll see what I mean when I comp[illegible]n that our minister's too timorous.

"They'd ben a-shinglin the roof, and the money hed to be raised to pay the bill. When the sermon and the other exercises was over, the preacher said: 'Now we'll take up the offering. The offering's got to be large this mornin' to pay for repairs to this edifice. The elements used to beat in through the leaks in the sanctuary ceiling, and we had to have the roof fixed; fixing it cost money, and the money's now due. Brethren, shut the door and pass the plates.'

"The plates were passed and the money was counted. It was not enough. The minister looked firmly down at the congregation. 'Brethren,' he said, 'lock them doors and give me the key. Not a soul leaves here till we have the hull amount necessary. Sing "Saved by Grace," and pass the plates again.'

"The amount was again counted. It was larger than before, but it was not yet enough.

"The preacher rose again in his place, looking very sad and stern, like a father when he's obliged to make a stand with his boys, or a teacher when he's downright mad.

"'Friends,' he said, 'the doors are locked, and I've got the key in my pocket. This congregation won't be let to go home till this money for the roof is raised. Your dinners are waiting. Some of you have babies crying at home. Some of you has given till you've felt it, but none of you has been squeezed yet. I tell you this is a case of squeeze. Lyddy,' addressing one of the singers, 'step out and give us a solo, while the plates go round the third time. Then we'll all rise and roll out grandly, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'"

"A couple of dudes in the back seat, young men from the city, turned their purses inside out that time, an' the money was raised. What do you think of that? Wasn't he a hustler, Brother Simpson?"

"All I've got to say is that Brother Bancroft couldn't do such a thing, and you wouldn't like it if he could. But I agree with you that he's got into a rut, and a change would be a good thing—perhaps. I've nothing against Mr. Bancroft as a man. He's a fine fellow; personally I like him, but I think somebody else might do better for the Black Hill church."

It's always a rather sorrowful crisis which has come to the church, when the leading men begin making the above distinction as they describe their feelings.

"Father," called a voice from the bedroom, on the same floor with the sitting-room, in which the two deacons were holding their evening pow-wow, "Father!"

"Well, mother?"

The deacon was always a little subdued by his wife.

"If you and Deacon Simpson are goin' to talk much longer, would you mind adjournin' to the parlor?"

"I'm just off," said Deacon Simpson, with a glance at the clock, which was on the eve of striking ten. "We'll continue this subject later on. Marthy'll be wonderin' what's become of me."

As Deacon Baldwin shut and barred the door, a figure

in a white nightdress emerged from the chamber. Mrs. Baldwin had thrust her feet into carpet slippers, and drawn a little checked shawl around her shoulders. She seated herself in a rocker, and looked inquiringly at her husband.

"Wot call have you and Deacon Simpson to be sittin' up so late Sunday nights, pullin' the minister to pieces?"

"I'll not be questioned, mother."

"I want to know, I say, Robert Baldwin, wot call has Aaron putterin' 'round here so often after prayer-meetin's? I don't like it, an' I won't have it."

"There—there—Lucinda, keep quiet, do. There's no occasion for you to be stirred up. Fact is, we feel as if Mr. Bancroft's period of usefulness was about over, and we're devisin' some easy way of letting him know our opinion."

"I thought as much."

Mrs. Baldwin rose, and turned her face toward her bedroom door. "Put out the lamp, Robert, and go to your bed. You seem to have clean forgot our little Mary, and how good the minister was to her, how he loved her, how she clung to him. No, Robert, say no more to me. I'm going to sleep. Good night."

. . . . . .

A similar remonstrance was in store for Deacon Simpson when he went home. Whatever the men of the parish might want, the women were solidly for their pastor. He had baptized and administered communion; he had married some of his people, and stood by the sick-beds of others, and everywhere he had brought cheer and comfort and wise counsel. Yet there were those who, because of a deficit in the treasury, easily accounted for in the changed conditions of the place, the fewness of men of means, and the absence of young people, many of whom had sought the city as a better field for earning money, were desirous that the brave and self-denying man of God should leave them. He felt the alienated atmosphere, but his heart was uplifted, because in spite of it, he knew that he was breaking the

bread of life to starving souls. The cold weather was approaching, and Mr. Bancroft badly needed a new overcoat, which he could not buy unless his salary was paid. Nevertheless, he resolved to make the old one, thin and threadbare, do, if he could not get another, and day by day he was seen riding his white pony over the hills, stopping at this and the other lonely cabin, and talking to men as they ploughed, or dragged, or sowed, whatever their work might be. To many a weary house-mother his call brought rest and joy; to many a fevered child he carried medicine for the body as for the mind; many a secret was whispered in his ear, and many a feud he healed.

As the malcontent deacons discussed Mr. Bancroft, he was calmly reading his New Testament, by the light of his single luxury, an astral lamp. And this was what he read, before he, too, sought his pillow on the night of our story; "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier."

"Yes, Brother Paul the Apostle," said the modern follower of Jesus, looking up to an invisible heaven, "I, too, belong to your company. I, too, for Christ's sake, can endure hardship. I, too, am a soldier on service." And, far into the night, he mused and prayed.

. . . . . .

A group of people were gathered at five o'clock the next day in the store, which was also the postoffice, waiting for the mail. Deacon Baldwin, Deacon Simpson, and half the village were there, when a wild-eyed apparition, in the usual garb of a mountaineer, trousers tucked into high top boots, a wide slouch hat on his head, a man unkempt, and rough as his own hills, rushed in, with haste and fury.

"I want the Holy Ghost man," he cried. "Where does he live? My little Harry is dying. Tell me how to find the Holy Ghost man."

A hush fell for a second or two, as the cry for help smote like a sharp sword across the gossip about Jersey cows, and the patter of town politics. Then, a little maid in a blue cotton frock, and a slatted sunbonnet, looked up, with her violet eyes shining, and her sweet, bell-like voice was the man's answer. She stood in the doorway, near the questioner.

"Mr. Bancroft lives over there," pointing with a slender, brown finger, "next to the church. He's our minister."

The next minute, the mountaineer was rapping loudly on the parsonage door. Presently Mr. Bancroft came out, and after a moment's converse, the listeners at the store heard him say:

"All right, Jack, keep up your courage. Tell Harry I'm coming. Maybe he's not so bad as you think, and please God, we'll pull him through. But if not you and I will trust God."

In the silence of the afternoon the even tones of the minister, though not raised, carried clearly, and many heard them. The man called Jack mounted his horse and galloped madly away, and in five minutes, on his white pony, Mr. Bancroft was racing after him.

"The Holy Ghost man!" "Yes," said the little maid. "My Aunt Phœbe lives yonder in the hollow, up on Tom, and she says the people 'round there call Mr. Bancroft that, for they think God is all the time with him."

Could those thoughtful people have followed and entered Jack Holcomb's small cabin, they would have seen their pastor, first, as he stooped on reaching the low door, say solemnly:

"Peace be to this house!" Next, on his knees, by Harry's bed he would have uttered a prayer, tender and very simple, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; just a simple, brief, earnest petition, for the minister always talked to God as a man talks to his friend. Then lifting the gasping and apparently dying lad in his strong arms, they would

have seen him bear the child outside under the trees, away from the close and suffocating air, thick with odors of fried food, stale coffee and tobacco, and calling for water from the spring, they would have watched him bathe the child while he administered spoonfuls of hot milk and stimulants alternately. Two hours' hard work and the minister could say:

"Harry will do, but you must have open windows all night; I'll be back very early. Praise the Lord for all His goodness."

Going down the mountain, he stopped to gather into his kind arms that foriornest of created beings, a stray dog, bereft of its master. Comforting and soothing this waif and patting the pony's neck, as the surefooted beast plodded and picked her steep way homeward, the pastor sought his home.

In the group at the postoffice there had been a stranger, a man from a distant city, who had been a witness to the little scene.

"So they call your minister the Holy Ghost man, do they?" he said to Deacon Baldwin.

"Yes," the deacon hesitated, "he ain't much of a preacher, but they set great store by him back there in the mountains. They're a wild, ignorant lot, very poor, and they won't come to hear the Gospel."

"So your pastor carries it to them; that strikes me as like his Master. I'll wait over a Sunday and hear him preach. That kind of man ought to have a chance at souls in a bigger place where there are more of them. I shouldn't wonder if you people were poor judges of preaching."

The deacon frowned, but the newcomer was buying a generous bill of goods for a farm which, it seemed, he had lately purchased in the neighborhood, so he deemed it best not to notice the last remark.

But no one was to hear the Holy Ghost man in Black Hill pulpit for many a day. The pony, so sure of foot that she could go anywhere in the dark or in the night, stumbled

on a loose stone and fell, pitching her rider over her head. She trotted home alone, and those who went to seek the minister found him lying, an unconscious heap, at the foot of one of the roughest hills, with the little dog watching beside him. Whether or not he will again take up his work men cannot now tell, but hillmen and villagers alike are now praying that their Holy Ghost man may be spared to them.

The two deacons wear faces of shame amid the general compassion, and the little maid in her blue cotton frock comes every day to answer the parsonage door and tell sorrowful inquirers what the doctor said on his last visit.

BARBARA'S LAWN PARTY

LAWN parties had been the order of the day in Cliffdale. Mrs. Squires, who had a great expanse of green sward, dotted with trees and gay with beds of brilliant flowers, had been first to set the fashion for the season. Bessie and Katharine Squires were at home from their Freshman year in college, and, naturally, there was a rally of the younger ones at their *fete*. They had tennis and croquet; boats to accommodate those who wanted to row on the river, and a band that discoursed sweet music at intervals from the vine-screened south end of the veranda. Mrs. Moore gave the next party from four to seven, on a summer's day, in honor of her visiting cousin, a lady from Boston. Here young matrons predominated, and the husbands appeared one by one when trains brought business people home from town. Other lawn parties succeeded these, each with its brightness of coloring; its peculiar form of pleasing entertainment; its rugs spread on the velvet turf; its small tables for refreshments, and its dainty bill of fare. One mother had a birthday party on the lawn for a pair of twins, aged four, and this included every baby who could toddle, and was, on the whole, the liveliest party of all.

Barbara Mace had been a guest at every lawn party of the summer, and, indeed, wherever there was anything on foot there you might count on meeting Barbara. She was not a girl, but she was not old. She had no wonderful dower of beauty, but her vivid, dark face, sparkling eyes, and ready smile, had a charm beyond mere beauty. Barbara never seemed to be making an effort, or to be leaving an impression, yet she brought sunshine and sweetness with her, by her grace, tact, and real unselfishness, and

nothing was complete without her. To Cliffdale, she had come, a stranger, in quest of rest and country food and air, as far back as early April. Now, in September, every one knew her, and she bore in the conservative old village the sway, and exercised the influence of a person whom they had known in that vicinage all their lives. Could Barbara have shown them her precious city home, and introduced them to her wide circle of city friends, the people of Cliffdale would have realized that there, too, she was a social queen.

The tree-toads were singing in the lingering twilight; birds were dropping now and then a single sleepy note, and summer visitors were packing their trunks to go home, when Barbara Mace, coming back from a long tramp in the woods, talked over the past weeks and their joys, with her devoted admirers, Bessie and Katharine Squires.

"Yes," said the latter, "it's all been lovely, but I'm rather relieved that it's over. Cliffdale will now resume its normal condition, and it will be rather pleasant to have a breathing-spell, before we go back to Vassar."

"Breathing-spell!" Bess lifted up her hands in amazement. "Why, sister dear, we have the dentist, and the dressmaker, and the seamstress, and shopping in prospect, and simply no end of things to do. I expect we'll be rushed from now to the last day."

"We ought to have another lawn party, girls," said Barbara, positively.

The girls opened their eyes and stared at her.

"Another! Who would come to it?" cried Bessie.

"I shall be hostess," said Barbara, again with conviction as who should say, "Here is a duty I cannot shirk!"

"Where do you purpose having your party, Barbara?" inquired Katharine.

"In Mr. Allaire's apple orchard. I'm sure he'll lend it for the purpose."

The girls waited for further information. Barbara,

as they seated themselves beside her in the arbor where there was so beautiful a view of the sunset, was ready to gratify their curiosity. They had been tramping over the hills, and their hands were full of spoil—mosses, vines, flowers. Their cheeks were flushed with health, their eyes were shining. All three young women were pictures of vigor and might have posed to an artist who wanted to put on canvas his idea of the joy of life. To each of them just to be living was bliss.

As they sat on one of the arbor seats, three girls of their own age passed, sauntering down the path, on their way to the shore of the river. Bessie nodded carelessly.

"How tired they look!" she observed.

Tired they did indeed look, Mrs. Squires' Maggie, Mrs. Parks' Susan, Mrs. Wilmer's Norah. All three had been broiling over stoves, and working in steaming laundries for many weeks. Their share of the summer had been to serve others in humble ministry.

They had been well paid, but their labor had been unremitting. Mr. Wilmer usually reached home so late that Norah seldom had an evening. The Parks' household had been continually augmented by company, and Susan had felt worn out for weeks. As for Maggie, the Squires' sisters were well aware that life in their home was no sinecure for the housemaid, although they had a cook and coachman besides.

"Girls," said Barbara, "I'm going to give a lawn party for the maids. We'll invite them, some of us will wait on them, others will manage their work at home, and we'll combine the affair with an evening for the housekeepers, who have been taking boarders all summer, and have been left out of the four."

"Aren't you afraid the maids will be spoiled?" asked Katharine timidly.

"No, dear," was Barbara's reply. "Loving kindness and Christian charity never spoiled anybody since the world began."

The three lingered long outdoors, and when they parted, their plans were outlined. At Bessie's suggestion, Barbara gave up her idea of an added party in the evening for the housekeepers. It was decided to have a big lawn party, and to make it a picnic, in which social distinctions should be ignored and class lines obliterated. And the heft of the work, the real hard part, was to be done, not by the maids, but by the mistresses; not by the busiest women, but by those who had the most leisure.

Thursday was chosen as the least onerous day of the week, between Monday's washing, Tuesday's ironing and Wednesday's baking. It usually erected a temporary barrier, before Friday's sweeping and Saturday's scrubbing, and alas! Sunday's feasting came flooding in. Barbara went about in person giving her invitations, and everywhere she left a trail of pleased excitement behind her.

"The saints bless her swate face," exclaimed Maggie at the Squires', and the sentiment was echoed everywhere else. Barbara's scheme met enthusiastic general approval.

She went about among the girls she knew and pressed into service those who had particular accomplishments, and she did not omit a lad or two, who might have something to contribute.

"The guests of the day will wish to rest," she said, "but they will also want to be amused."

So Tim Squires was asked to give a solo on his banjo, and Lucy Halsted performed on the harp, and Bessie Squires was put on the program for a recitation. The soft rugs and the easy chairs and rockers, the little tables, and the pretty tea equipages, were taken to the Allaire orchard. Never were sandwiches more delicately made, nor was chocolate more beautifully frothed and crowned with whipped cream till every cup was ambrosial, while the fragrance of the freshly made tea was like incense.

"There are women here who brew their tea for an hour," said Barbara, steeping her leaves for just two minutes in

the merrily boiling water. "I have known them to 'wet the tea,' as they called it, at four o'clock for a six o'clock supper. Two hours beforehand that was. It was concentrated bitterness, as you may fancy."

Tea and chocolate, buns, dainty biscuits, scones, sandwiches and cake, with ice cream at the end of the *fete,* made a repast that was fit for any one on earth. The guests enjoyed it, and enjoyed the music and the fun and all the merry-making. On only one point, they took a firm stand.

"We'll help you clear it up, Miss Barbara," they said.

"We will, indeed, Barbara dear," added Mrs. Allaire, whose house was full of boarders from garret to cellar.

"Indeed, and you will not," was Barbara's answer. "You are to go home properly from my party, and never mind the clearing away."

She had her own views and she carried them out. The youths and maidens were there to lend a hand, and possibly some of them gained a notion hitherto unknown of the number of steps, the number of dishes, and the number of separate individual hindrances that always go to the clearing away of a meal, to say nothing of the work there is in getting one ready. Barbara's lawn party was the cap-sheaf of the Cliffdale season.

ONE DAY IN MARYLAND

TEN thousand men in faded army blue were encamped near Annapolis, in the last year of the Civil War. The atmosphere around them was full of unrest; the tense anticipation of an impending crisis. They were eating their hearts out in the *ennui* of idleness, when any day the nation's destiny might hang on the turn of a battle, and they were seasoned soldiers. To the general uneasiness, the men from counties near by added a peculiar and tormenting homesickness. Every State in the Union was represented in the fragmentary companies of paroled prisoners awaiting exchange, but a man from Iowa could be more philosophical in foregoing a reluctantly granted furlough, than a fellow from Princess Anne or Prince George, who was, so to speak, in his own bailiwick. The latter had hunted over every field, and fished in every brook in the State. Furthermore, his home people were in the unpopular minority, in a region where opinion in a turbulent period was sharply divided, and, being so near, he longed to see for himself how they had fared in his absence. There was no little jeering at the governmental red tape. It was trying to be tied with a string, unable to lift hand or foot when so much was happening at the front.

Tom MacGregor was a private in a Maryland regiment. He had spent ten drearily dragging months in Libby, and had been three weeks in camp; three weary weeks, with his home embowered among peach orchards, not ten miles away. He could shut his eyes, and see the long, low rambling house, white to the eaves; the lean-to, where old Aunt Phyllis pottered and grumbled over her cookery; the porch with the split-bottomed chairs, and his wife's

chamber, with the billowy feather bed, at the right of the broad passage; you went up to that bed by steps. There was a little white crib in the corner; and a table between the windows, where candles stood, and Molly kept her prayer-book and his picture. Tom was a big fellow, six feet two in his stockings; broad-shouldered, blue-eyed.

Two years and more had elapsed since he had enlisted, leaving a young wife and a month-old baby in the care of Aunt Phyllis, at the farm.

An older man in the tent was puffing away at a short clay pipe, and poring over a novel, as Tom, one morning, read his letter from Molly. Molly's letter was his daily bread of comfort, but today he read it with a groan that was melancholy personified.

"What's up, Tom?" his friend asked, after a glance at the haggard wretchedness of MacGregor's face.

"Molly's ill; the boy, too. She's afraid he's going to die."

"Oh, maybe not," said the father of seven, cheerfully, with an effort at consolation. "Kids frighten the life out of you, especially when there's only one. They can get into awfully close quarters with death, and then cheat him. Benny may be chipper enough by now. Brace up, old man."

"The trouble is, I've forgotten how to do it," said Tom desperately. "I want to go home."

"So do I; but I can wait."

"Well, I can't. I've simply got to see Molly and the baby. There's more in it, Ed, than her being down with the chills, and the boy having croup; lots more. That measly, low-down cur of a Dick Elmore is about again with his crowd, and Molly's almost out of her mind. And here am I, helpless! 'Tisn't as if I were a hundred miles away, either. It's not to be borne. Flesh and blood can't stand it."

"Dick Elmore back!" cried Ed Mallory, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and sitting up. He had been lounging a bit over his book.

"I thought Dick and his crew were off to the war safe enough."

"They have been; but they are mustered out, and they've been loitering around the old place lately. Ed, you remember that Dick courted Molly Russell when I did. He swore that she was his sweetheart first, and vowed he'd be even with me for getting ahead of him. Now's his chance. He may burn the house down over her head. She may be homeless this minute."

"Come, Tom, be reasonable. Dick is low-down as you say, but not so low-down. The country-side would be too hot for him if he did a thing like that. I know the breed, but seriously, I don't think even Dick would attack a defenseless woman. Pull yourself together, man. Walk boldly up to headquarters; tell the colonel about it, and get a leave."

"No use, Ed."

"I'd like to know why it's no use?"

"Colonel's kind enough, but he's under orders. He can't grant any more furloughs at present, things being as they are. Tell you what, Ed, I'm in a hole, for sure. If I can't get out I'll go mad. Think of it, Molly needs me, and I can't do a thing but write. What's writing worth? Poor little Molly needs me!"

Ed Mallory smoked in silence. At home, he and Tom were neighbors. He had seen pretty Molly Russell grow up from a light-hearted child into a beautiful girl who was the toast of the county. She had queened it imperiously the year she left school, and it was hers to take her pick of the men with whom she danced, and rode, and flirted, as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. There had been a neck-to-neck race for her favor between Tom MacGregor and Dick Elmore, and Tom had come off victor. Ed had a passing memory of Dick Elmore glooming in the church aisle, and bringing black looks to the wedding supper; but for that matter, the young men for miles around felt like wearing

crape on their sleeves when Molly Russell married. Presently, Ed looked up to see Tom glowering from the edge of his cot, blackness on his brow, his lips compressed.

"Dick Elmore's an ornery cuss, for a fact," meditated Ed Mallory. He mentally looked back at that rose-crowned wedding day, and then thought how a year afterward the war-cloud had burst and swept their county clear of all the able-bodied men. Nobody left in it but the women and children, the very old men or the very young, or the hopelessly infirm. Union or Confederate, the fighting contingent had found its place in the ranks.

Till Tom had spoken, Ed had completely forgotten that Dick Elmore came of a family noted for vindictiveness, with traditions of the vendetta. Its history was bad all through. The Elmores stopped at nothing when they were at feud, yet, to Ed's calm, common sense, it seemed impossible that anybody, even an Elmore, should be forever implacable because a girl had discarded one man and chosen another. Surely, Molly had been well within her rights.

"Why not go home, old man? Cut and run for it," Ed bent forward, speaking low. Tent walls are thin.

Tom drew a long breath. "I might."

"Not that I think Dick's going to be up to any foolishness. It's you I'm studying over. You could take French leave easy enough, dead easy. It's been done in this camp, and not found out. You would not have to stay away long. I'd account for you somehow. And, Tom, if you go, try to see Sally and my folks at home. Take my love to them."

A mist came over Ed's honest eyes. As he brushed it away with his rough brown hand, he started to his feet, and Tom did the same. Both were Marylanders, and instinctively gallant in the presence of a woman. The wife of the commandant was standing in the low doorway of the tent. She parted its flaps, and came composedly in.

Tall, fair, with coppery hair massed in a great knot low in her neck, dressed in white linen, with a big shade hat,

and a green parasol, this girl-wife of the old colonel looked like the spirit of the spring. To the war-worn veterans, and the men in hospital, tossing on the hard cots, she was as the spirit of home itself. She went her rounds daily as the doctors did, a ministering angel everywhere. But at this instant she was an unwelcome apparition in Tom MacGregor's tent.

"You shouldn't speak so loud, you two," she said. "Somebody else might hear you. No, don't worry, boys, nobody did hear you, as it happened, except me, and I won't tell." She stepped to the tent door and looked out. The camp was asleep in the white glare of the morning sun. In a field some distance off men were playing baseball. The street was very still.

"This is, just now, a deserted village. Why don't you go home, Tom MacGregor?" said the colonel's wife, softly. She looked him straight in the eyes, and spoke persuasively.

"Slip away between two days, and come back the same way. Go and see Molly. I'll keep your secret. You can evade the guards somehow."

Whence came her knowledge? Was she a temptress or a man's best friend? The two soldiers gazed at her in bewilderment. There was novelty in the situation and a little perplexity. But they believed in a good woman's wisdom. Nevertheless, Ed hedged.

"Things are better fair and open," he said.

He was regretting his counsel of a moment ago. Tom was reading his letter again. He handed it silently to the lady.

"Oh," she gasped, as her eyes fell on Molly's blotted, hurried scrawl, "you must see your child; Jack must let you go, right away. I'll speak for you." Then she recalled herself. "But he's not here; he's been ordered to Washington and he went on the last train. He may not be back for some days. And Major Sutphen has no heart; nothing but a stone under his uniform. He wouldn't care."

The men nodded. The little woman voiced their own sentiments. So they "sized up" the major. All three knew Major Sutphen as a bluff, rigid, perfect martinet. The colonel's wife had frequent quarrels with him, and he regarded her as an upsetter of discipline, and a sort of spoiled child, though he shared with everyone else a real liking for her sweet and fearless ways. The colonel's wife knew that she was about to do something indefensible; but the woman's heart was stronger than her mind, and she did not hesitate.

"Mr. MacGregor," she said, "I'll contrive somehow to get a bundle to you in a half hour. There will be a note inside with money. Go somewhere beyond camp limits, and put on my brother Alec's suit. It will fit you. Mr. Mallory here must look out for your uniform, and bring it back. I'll furnish the civilian's disguise, and your own wits must do the rest. Go boldly home by train. Why, you may eat supper tonight with Molly."

Her cheeks burned as she turned to leave; but it was with excitement only. She had never shrunk from the initiative in her life.

"God bless you forever and forever, madam," said Tom MacGregor, reverently.

"My soul!" exclaimed Ed. "If that woman isn't a trump! A regular brick, and no mistake."

The colonel's wife strolled back to the little house on the edge of the camp, where she had three little rooms of her own, in which to make a home, and brighten life for her husband and the staff. She passed the orderly at her door with a pleasant word, and went to her own room, where she made up the package of which she had spoken. Presently she sallied forth again, taking Laddie, her big collie, as her companion. So many times a day she went out on one or another errand of mercy, that her goings were unremarked by officers or men, only the stiff old major, meeting her, with a courtly bow asked, "Whither away," and if he might not carry her bundle?

"Thanks, major," she said. "I won't bother you. It isn't heavy."

When she was near Tom's tent she glanced carefully around to be sure she was unobserved, then sent Laddie forward with a bound, and the dog dropped his burden at Tom MacGregor's feet.

That night the soldier ate corn pone that Aunt Phyllis baked, and drank hot coffee that Molly poured for him, and held his little child in his arms at home. There had been no trouble. On the train he had awakened no suspicion, and as he left it in the gloaming he met nobody at the station. He had not kept the high road. It was quicker to go across the pasture and meadow land, ford the little brawling brook, foaming over the stepping-stones, and dash down the lane to the farmhouse door. To lift the latch; to steal in on Molly, and surprise her, had been his first intention, but he thought better of it, and gave his old knock and his old whistle, and stood, hat in hand, till she herself, with a cry of delight, came and drew him over the threshold. She could not speak for joy. Pale, thin, in a worn cotton gown, with big brown eyes that had haunting shadows beneath them, she was not much like the radiant girl he had married; but she was Molly, and he had his arms about her and kissed her as if he could never let her go. Then old Aunt Phyllis hugged and cried over her boy, whom she had nursed as she now nursed his son, and both women, the black as well as the white, hovered over him with a joy too deep for words. The child was better, thank God. "Real peart," said Aunt Phyllis, "and Miss Molly would soon be well now that Mars Tom had come home."

The house stood far back from the turnpike, sheltered behind great oaks; no one passed it after dark, yet Tom was a little uneasy until it was barred and bolted for the night.

"You are home for good, my darling?" said Molly wonderingly, touching the gray sleeve of Alec Moffatt's business suit.

The question embarrassed him, and a dull brick color slowly crept from chin to forehead.

"No, I'm not home for good," he said slowly. "I really have no right to be here, Molly. I stole away with a friend's help—sneaked away, to tell the truth. And I'm going back to camp as soon as I've seen you and my boy by daylight. Ed Mallory's looking out for me at that end."

He hated telling Molly how he had left his uniform under a scrub oak, and changed his clothing like a thief, skulking behind bushes, and afraid of rabbits when they scurried out of the copse. Tom MacGregor had never before had anything to hide. But Molly consoled him, not with mere words; with tender looks and wifely caresses. She rejoiced in his pluck, and scoffed at the idea of anything wrong in the matter.

"Had she no claim? Was the country to be everything?" she urged. She agreed with the colonel's wife that Tom had had no choice.

"Suppose Benny had died?" she asked, as he still looked unconvinced. "Could I have buried him alone?"

"Anyway," the big fellow shook himself like a dog reaching dry land after a plunge in the river, "here I am now, dear, and I did it with my eyes open, and for the best. Let's have one happy day."

They did. The next day was retained in Molly's memory forever as the red-letter day of her life—a day perfect, unmarred, blissful, when joy rose to its highest tidal wave.

Night came to even such a day, and black Phyllis again went about securing doors and windows. The front door was fastened by a big wooden bar that rested on iron staples. Most of the windows had thick wooden shutters, but the porch windows were shielded only by blind Phyllis put the candles out. The pine knots on the hearth made a ruddy blaze. "Light enough to court by, honey," she said to her Miss Molly. At last she creaked heavily upstairs to the

loft where she slept; and Tom, by the hearth, gathered his wife in his arms, and sat there talking, with her head on his breast. Dick Elmore had not been mentioned, but now Tom asked casually if Molly thought him still in the county.

"Oh, he's gone, Tom dear. Aunt Phyllis hears everything; she says he's gone away West. I was a baby to write to you; but I'm afraid of my life of that man."

"Molly, that's what compelled me to come home. Not your fear, but mine. I had a vision; of course it was absurd, but it rose before me, of Dick's coming here in the night and frightening you. It's dreadful, your being here alone with nobody but Aunt Phyllis. The thought has made me a deserter for two days. But I'll be off at daybreak with a light heart, for you see, dearest, we may be exchanged any hour now, and it's dangerous to be absent without leave. The thing rather breaks me up. I've had a clean record thus far. Another year will see the war finished, I hope, and then I'll be at home with you forever."

Another year! Molly sighed. It looked endless before her. She leaned closer in her husband's arms. There, tired out, she fell asleep. He would not move lest he should disturb her. Across the hall Molly's chamber stood invitingly open. The bed was whitely spread, and the covers turned down. Tom thought of carrying her over and laying her on her bed, but it was so dear to hold her as he did. He passed his fingers gently over her hair. His eyes lingered on her little ear, like a pink shell, on her cheek that had lost so much roundness, on the delicate mouth, and the long, curling eyelashes. His Molly! His precious wife! He had been a prisoner in Libby, and now he was at home: a sojourner in hell, this was heaven.

Thus encircled by his arms, Molly slept awhile, and Tom drowsed and dreamed. Suddenly he was startled. Something was astir outside. The old dog growled in his kennel. Surely there were hoof-beats and smothered voices. Tom's senses were alert, and he was at once wide awake.

What was that at the porch window—there one second, gone the next? What but a face, so sinister, so cruel, so menacing, it set all his blood fiercely pumping like fever in his veins. But he controlled himself, and was cool and steady as he laid Molly gently down on the worn old sofa, deliberately bent and kissed her, and reached automatically for his rifle. Alas! it was in camp.

A tap at the door.

"Open to friends," said a voice he remembered. For an instant he was minded not to, and Aunt Phyllis, lumbering heavily from the loft, called to him in agonized accents to stay inside.

"Don't unbar de do', for de Lord's sake, Mars Tom," she begged.

But the voice he knew taunted him mockingly from outside.

"'Fraid are you? Who'd counted on that? 'Fraid of an old chum at that! Well, I'll be off. A MacGregor afraid of an Elmore! Bein' in prison so long has done that, I suppose."

Tom dropped the wooden bar, and opening the door, stepped to the porch.

"Hello, old man!" Dick Elmore's dare-devil laugh challenged him. "Met in good time, as I've always intended. Say your last prayer, Tom MacGregor, your time has come!"

In the yard back of Dick were a half dozen men on horseback. They were huddled together in the shadows, but as their leader spoke, they closed about the house and covered Tom with their revolvers. Dick held his own six-shooter, taking deadly aim at Tom.

"Out of the way, Aunty," he called to Phyllis, who in the entry was wringing her hands and imploring. "No use in killing you, too; you'll have your work looking out for Tom's widow. Say your prayers, Tom, I tell you. It's your last hour on earth. Your time has come."

In that supreme moment the nerve of the MacGregors stood Tom in good stead. He did not blanch. An old schoolmate, holding Dick Elmore's horse by the bridle, turned away in momentary shame.

"You miserable coward and bully," came Tom's voice, cold as steel, "would you murder an unarmed man? Will you not give me one chance for my life?"

"I have meant to kill you sooner or later, Tom, ever since you stole the girl I wanted to marry. So, good-bye."

As he fired his own hand was struck, and the ball was deflected from its course. It did not reach Tom's heart. A pistol shot from indoors crossed it, and the assassin rode off wounded. Molly MacGregor had awakened. She was on her feet in an instant, and the loaded pistol, without which no woman on the border felt safe in those troublous times, was snatched from her mantel. Oh, that Tom had thought of it before he opened the door! She fired, quick as thought, not knowing nor caring whether she had hit anyone or not, for as Dick jumped on his horse and galloped away, Tom fell across the threshold in a swoon.

"Hush, honey! hush!" Aunt Phyllis was trying to find where her master had been struck. It was somewhere below the heart. She slipped her black arm under his head and moistened his lips.

"Hush, honey," she repeated to Molly, who moaned and wailed. "Mars Tom's not hurt that bad. Mars Dick didn't know 'nuff to shoot straight, Miss Molly! Reckon you hit him shore!"

"Tom's dying!" moaned Molly. The baby woke up and cried. Nobody noticed.

"No, not dying," said Tom weakly. "Only knocked out of the ring, dear. Bring Benny for me to kiss. I'm going back to camp, Molly."

The man tottered to his feet, ghastly white.

"Bind me tightly, Phyllis," he commanded. "You know how."

"Tom, dear, you'll not try to go to camp," pleaded Molly. "I'll go and explain. You stay and let me nurse you. I can't let you go. You'd die on the way."

"It isn't death I fear, Molly. It's dishonor. I can't leave my boy a stained name. The—train—starts—at daybreak. Get me back to camp, if you love me, Molly."

Aunt Phyllis wasted no time in words. She harnessed the gray old pony to the farm wagon, heaped straw in the bottom for a bed, and almost lifted her master in. Molly climbed up and supported his head. Phyllis drove them to the station. Then, her stout heart breaking, she hurried home to look after Tom's boy.

Ed Mallory was sitting in the tent, puffing at his pipe. Morning parade was over. Thus far all had gone well. Tom had not been missed.

He looked down the road. The tent was at the head of the company street, the woods only a little way off. Then his heart stood still. For slowly walking, step by step, as if each step were agony, came the ghost, it seemed, of Tom MacGregor, and Molly assisting him, deadly pale, walked by his side. They reached the tent. Tom lurched forward and Ed caught him.

"Quick, Ed," he whispered. "My uniform. Get me into my jacket."

Ed and Molly helped him. When the jacket was on he fainted away.

Tom had not actually been missed. Ed was right. But that old fox, the major, had his suspicions and his intuitions. He had just scribbled a note on a pad and sent for an orderly to carry a message. The absence from evening drill and morning parade of the fine young Marylander, who was the most striking figure in the remnant of his regiment, had not escaped the major's keen observation. He resolved to inquire about it. But at this moment the major had a shock. Into the tent at headquarters, where he sat with the adjutant, dashed the colonel's wife like a tempest,

and threw herself in a sobbing heap, into a chair in front of him.

The major may not have had a heart, but he was a man, and he loathed the sight of an hysterical woman.

"Good heavens, madam!" he ejaculated, "stop crying, and tell me what has happened. Have you had bad news from the colonel?"

"Oh, Major Sutphen, if Jack were only here," she cried. "It's my fault, every bit of it. Tom MacGregor's dying in his tent and his wife's there with him; and if it hadn't been for me, he wouldn't have gone away and this needn't have happened. He's wounded, and I'm the one to arrest. I've done it all."

"I never did believe in women fooling around a camp," growled the major to the adjutant, but the colonel's wife did not hear him. When he strode wrathfully out, the adjutant following him closely, she shivered and cried a little more, then suddenly dried her eyes and ran after them.

"Wait for me, major," she called. "Let me explain!"

The major did not stop. He strode on, in angry haste.

At the sight of his approach, men gathered here and there in knots scattered apart. The street was quiet as the two officers approached Tom MacGregor's tent. As they crossed the sill, the burly army surgeon, standing by the cot, held up a peremptory hand.

"Be silent," he said.

Molly was kneeling by the bed. Ed Mallory, stern and grim-visaged, stood at the foot. Tom lay apparently unconscious, his faded jacket open, snow not whiter than his face.

They stood there as if frozen. The major, impressive and austere, the adjutant, curious yet sympathetic, the colonel's wife, her eyes wide with apprehension, the doctor waiting the end.

The man on the cot opened his eyes. His hand feebly groped for his wife's.

"Good-bye, Molly," he said. "Tell Benny I was all right."

Then his glance brightened. He saw the major. With superhuman effort, he sat up and saluted.

"Here, sir!" he cried; fell back on his pillow and was gone.

. . . . . .

Every May time since then, a grieving woman and her boy have laid garlands on a soldier's grave. The woman is counting the years now, till she meets her hero again. Her boy Benny is a man, and he fought in the Spanish war. He has the heart of the MacGregors, and he loves his country.

A LITTLE PEACEMAKER

"APPARENTLY, then, we must agree to disagree. If you only would be reasonable, Ethel!"

"It is not a question of my being reasonable, Hugh. The fact is that you dislike my mother so thoroughly that you are never fair to her. You are a different person when she is in the house. As for me, I can't shut my door on my mother, and when she visits me I must treat her with politeness."

"You will not acknowledge that she is interfering and meddlesome and underbred! I shall not do you the injustice to suppose that you do not see these peculiarities of hers as clearly as I do, and if you would for once be candid and own that you see them, and confess that you regard Mrs. Dana's visits as an affliction, I would make an effort to treat her with greater cordiality."

"On the question of breeding, Hugh, I think the less said the better, by a husband who can bring himself to speaking to his wife about her widowed mother as you have just spoken to me. Mamma is not insufferably vain and domineering, purse-proud and arrogant like some persons I could name if I choose; I certainly do not regard her as either meddlesome or intrusive. Naturally, she takes an interest in the affairs of her only daughter, and naturally, if you brand her as ill-bred, you must apply the same epithet in your mind to me. Be careful, Hugh, you may go too far. I was a happy girl once, when I lived at home with my darling mother, and you saw no fault in her then.

I haven't found it so delightful being away from her, that I don't look back with envy on those days of peace."

Hugh Mainwaring pushed back his chair, and set his coffee cup down on the table with emphasis. He was about to make an angry retort, when the door of the dining-room opened slowly and a lady of middle age and impressive appearance swept towards the table, with a smooth, low-toned 'Good-morning,' which had a very subduing effect on the disturbed and heated atmosphere.

"Pardon my lateness," said Madam Mainwaring. "It was due to Maggie, who was tardy in bringing my hot water, and then, too, Ethel dear, your breakfast hour is a very uncertain quantity, one day you are early, another late, and I never know on what to count. It is very different at Martha's. Her housekeeping is most orderly, and Hugh, you must remember how fixed was our routine when you were a boy at home."

Hugh did remember it. He had never enjoyed the iron-clad rules of his early days. His mother's remark struck him as being decidedly inopportune, following on the conversation she had interrupted. Ethel's mother had just gone after a long visit. His own had just arrived. Neither of the young people got on well with the other's mother, and though Ethel's superior tact prevented her from openly showing her feelings, and kept her from displaying her deepening aversion, Hugh was aware that his wife had no higher opinion of his mother than he had of hers. Both mothers were widows; each had brought up an only child; each was envious of the affection which had won the child away; each distrusted the other, and when, as sometimes happened, the two met in the little married home, which ought to have been an Eden, it became the scene of hostilities hardly less deadly that they were conducted with sarcastic reference and ironical thrust, rather than with tangible weapons. Between them the two mothers had almost succeeded in blighting, as frost blights bloom, the happiness of Hugh and Ethel Mainwaring. The young people were

high-spirited and quick-tempered, possessed of an ample vocabulary and ill-disposed to bear and forbear, as most wedded couples must, in the early years when they are becoming adjusted to one another's ways, and gradually growing with a harmonious wholeness of life.

Most unfortunate are the newly married when obliged to carry on this process under the eyes of any outsider, however sympathetic and judicious. Mesdames Dana and Mainwaring were neither, and the little home with its tottering edifice of domestic peace testified to their misdirected influence in every jarring timber.

"Well!" said Hugh, slipping into his overcoat, "I must be off. Any commands in town, Ethel?"

"Nothing, thank you, except the prepared barley for baby, if you please," was the answer. Ethel was pouring coffee for the elder lady, and did not raise her lips for the kiss Hugh came over to offer her. He stooped and brushed her forehead with the end of his moustache, said good-bye, and was gone.

"Upon my word, Ethel," remarked Madam Mainwaring, "you treat that poor boy with scorn and contempt. At least you might go to the door with him; I always did. A man, in the world with its battles to fight, needs the backing of his home to keep him strong and steadfast. I fear, my love, that since baby came, you are permitting yourself a little to forget what is due to baby's father."

"Good gracious, mother!" exclaimed Ethel, a flush rising upon her cheek and spreading to the roots of her hair, "I would give everything I possess on earth if baby and I could be let alone for one day!"

"Such lack of self-control, Ethel, is very unbecoming in you, and will probably be harmful to your little one. Pray calm yourself and receive a suggestion from one so much your senior as Hugh's mother, without this unseemly display of temper. I am shocked at you, Ethel; shocked and disappointed as well!"

Mrs. Mainwaring had for many years carried on a fash-

ionable school for young ladies; her former pupils were accustomed to the quiet voice of discipline and the restraining cadences of what they called scolding, and she merited reproof, were familiar in their memories. She had been skilled in the art of subduing the refractory and reducing the rebellious to terms, and it is to be feared that she had enjoyed her power of ladylike invective, and had not scrupled to use it at discretion. From nagging to bullying, the whole gamut was in her practiced hands, and the suffering she inflicted never moved her to pity. In Ethel, however, she had to deal with no shrinking schoolgirl, afraid of tasks and penalties, and sensitive to an expression of disapproval from her mistress. Ethel resented her mother-in-law's officious criticism with a fierceness of anger disproportionate to the offense, and due in part to the friction which had preceded it in her intercourse with her husband.

She rose now, a stately little figure, drawing herself up and holding her head high. Her trailing rose-pink gown, trimmed with soft lace; her golden hair, her firm, unsmiling mouth, combined to make her a picture of graceful dignity as she paused a moment to say:

"Only Hugh has a right to find fault with me, mother, but you are my guest, and privileged, I fancy, beyond other people, by a life-long habit of setting the world right. Please excuse me, and I hope you will pass the morning agreeably. I am going to baby now, and later I have an engagement, but we will meet at luncheon."

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated Madam Mainwaring, when she found herself in solitude: "I wish to goodness Hugh had let me pick out a wife for him. Elsie Winston or Mary McDermott would have made him a lovely wife, but Ethel is too much for me, and for him, I fancy."

The elements for conjugal wretchedness being all in order, and the recurrence of scenes like those of the morning being somewhat frequent, it will surprise no one that the young people grew constantly farther apart. Baby, with

his wise, wee wrinkled face, seemed to puzzle over the problems in the midst of which he found himself, the poor child did not thrive, and the doctor told Ethel what was the matter.

"You are not yourself in condition to give him the nourishment he needs," he had said weeks before now; when the six-months-old child looking wizened and pallid, ceased gaining weight, and became limp and languid, the physician's advice was imperative.

"Wean the little fellow at once; it is his only hope, and, if you can't make up your mind to a wet nurse, follow my directions absolutely as to the sterilized milk, and the hours for feeding him. I wish I had you with him at St. Beatrice's Hospital; I don't understand it, Mrs. Mainwaring, but life is somehow too exciting for you—you are too nervous, too strained, and this little laddie feels it. American women are far too high strung; if you could take things as the German peasants do, it would be better for your children."

That's what I am always telling my daughter," observed Madam Mainwaring portentously. "She lacks repose," said the lady, herself looking like an antique statue, impassive, unemotional and correct.

"Old cat!" said the doctor under his breath, as he slammed the front door. "If Hugh and Ethel could be left to themselves, they'd be all right; and the kid would pick up immediately."

The most quarrelsome pair have intervals of truce, and the most exasperatingly fretful woman has her hours of sweetness and tranquillity. A man, however despotic, must sometimes unbend, and no home is uniformly clouded, even if it have a great many cloudy days. Strangely enough, it was after an unusually prolonged period of calm weather and over the merest trifle, that the next unfortunate quarrel came.

The two mothers had made several visits during the

twelve months, and, fractious as they were in some respects, they had a common ground of amity, in baby, now eighteen months old, sturdy on his little legs, and very sweet and dear. His winning ways, his broken efforts at speech, his walking, his teething, his baby loveliness, were matters of great pride and interest to each grandmother. They did not agree as to what was best for him, but they both loved him devotedly, and he tyrannized over them both. Mrs. Dana was a flighty little lady as to manner, but very gentle and kind hearted. Mrs. Mainwaring was always impressive, but she thawed before baby's charms. It was on a visit of hers, that Hugh was so misguided as to quote one of her sayings.

"Ethel, mother tells me that you leave the boy too much to Rosy. She wishes you would look after him yourself."

"I fancy Hugh, dear, that I may be trusted to look to my own baby's welfare. Your mother has too much time on her hands. I suppose she is forced to employ some of it in surveillance of me. I am not sure that she does not peruse my private letters when I am out shopping, or at the club, but I don't mind, I have nothing to hide."

Hugh crimsoned. The insinuation in regard to his mother's curiosity offended him deeply. He thought it coarse and unworthy of Ethel. In point of fact, it had a basis of justice. Madam Mainwaring did not hesitate to open Ethel's desk when she pleased, and she had been quite calmly reading a letter of Ethel's only the day before, when Ethel's entrance unexpectedly, disconcerted her but for a second. A course of spying upon schoolgirls had blunted her sensibilities.

"Pardon me, Ethel," she had explained, "I was looking for Lucille's last note, to refresh my memory about her memoranda."

"That is not Lucille's writing, mater," Ethel had replied calmly. She was really not sorry to have her suspicions and dislike confirmed.

Hugh did not know about this episode. With a man's want of tact he proceeded to re-enforce what he had said at first.

"Your absolute unfairness to my mother, Ethel, is very nearly unpardonable. I desire that you shall speak of her hereafter with respect, at least while she remains under our roof."

"For how long must that last?" said Ethel icily.

A stubborn look, which Ethel had seen before, showed itself upon Hugh's countenance. His brow visibly blackened.

"I hope my mother will stay here as long as may suit her convenience," he said. "I can have no more welcome presence in our home than hers."

"Perhaps you were more comfortable when hers was the only presence—before you were married, I mean?" said Ethel.

"Rather more comfortable, my dear," said Hugh; "but I beg your pardon. My mother was in the ranks of the workers until I left college, and I was with her alone, all told, only a year. These bickerings of ours are absurd. Bear in mind what I said about baby, won't you?"

"I shall forget nothing," answered Ethel.

Down town, sitting in his office and engaged with the multiform demands which press their claims upon the attention of a business man, Hugh seldom had much leisure or inclination to think about home. Is not this always so? The husband and father toils with hand and brain unremittingly to provide for his dear ones, but he does not dwell consciously all day long on the love he bears them. It is there, though, all the same, and a very strong and compelling force it is in his life—the background of everything he does.

Ethel's sweet face, dimmed by resentment, mentally opposed itself to Hugh's usual complacency, after he had left her. There is no worse beginning for any man's day than a misunderstanding with his people at home, most of all

with his wife. By degrees the conviction settled upon him that he was not a gentleman in his conduct to Ethel, scolding her and losing his temper and interfering in her province; and Hugh had the grace to feel very much ashamed of himself.

"When I was her lover and not her husband," the poor fellow said in his thought, gloomily surveying his ledger, where the black figures, in their long straight columns, stared at him like so many witches, "I never spoke to Ethel except affectionately. I was always trusting her judgment, always complimenting her; and now I am learning to act like a cad. And, bless my heart and soul, tomorrow is the dear girl's birthday!"

Once having recalled her birthday, Hugh decided to lay a peace-offering on its altar, and to buy for his wife the most welcome birthday gift he could think of. He knew that she wanted a set of blue china, of a forget-me-not pattern. She had admired and wished for this for a long time, and when he left the office for the day he stopped and bought this and ordered it sent home. Then he called at the florist's and purchased a bunch of white and pink carnations—Ethel's favorite flower; and so, faring homeward with a lighter heart than he had carried away in the morning, he ran up his own steps at last, and let himself in with his latch-key.

"Hugh!" called Ethel over the banisters, "come up very softly, dear. Baby is ill. He has had a convulsion."

Hugh's anxiety was equal to hers when anything serious ailed their little son. "Have you had the doctor?" he asked. "What caused it? Is he better now?"

"We don't know what caused it; he was in it a long while; as black as your hat, and Doctor Frank was here for two hours. But he is quiet now, and dear mamma, most fortunately, came to help me enjoy my birthday, and she has him now."

Hugh had to acknowledge, when he saw Mrs. Dana

handle the baby, that she knew more about little children than his mother did, and it was an unspeakable comfort to see how deft and capable was her management, to hear her voice, to watch her as she moved about, the born nurse, efficient and clever, and knowing what to do.

Madam Mainwaring came into the nursery, looking pale and shaken. Her face was drawn as if with pain, she shivered and seemed forlorn. Her daughter-in-law went up to her and gently took her cold, unresisting hand in a firm clasp.

"You are used up, mater. You must not be worried any longer. Baby is out of danger now, and mamma is here; that alone makes me feel safer than I could without her."

"Yes, thank God!" ejaculated the stately Madam Mainwaring, and she stopped and kissed Mrs. Dana's plump cheek.

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So it came to pass that for that time at least, the baby was a little peacemaker. The two older women, in many ways antagonistic, laid their differences aside and became as one over the flaxen haired, blue-eyed, dimpled grandchild, who was to both an idol, and the pledge of God's goodness to them in showing them the second generation.

"Hugh," said Ethel, blushing, as on her birthday she unpacked the forget-me-not china, "I have a confession to make to you, and perhaps when you hear it you will say that I do not deserve this exquisite present When you left me yesterday I was so angry that I made up my mind to go home to mamma and stay with her a long while. I packed my trunk, and telegraphed my train, and I was going without saying good-bye to you."

"Oh, Ethel!"

"Yes; but mamma answered my despatch with another, 'Don't come, house closed, on my way to you.' The curious thing was that she had had a dream about baby and me which worried her. Dear mamma is a person who has

dreams and warnings and she could not rest, and just as the poor wee mannie was taken ill, in she walked, like an angel of mercy."

"I need never have known your intention, wifie, if you had not told me so candidly," said Hugh. "Now, let me, in my turn, tell you that I was ashamed all day of my moroseness yesterday, and, God helping me, I vowed not to pain you so again. And Ethel darling, I see just what it is: you and I never have any friction when we are by ourselves, but we each have made the mistake of letting our feelings toward our mothers allow a disturbance of our peace. From this time on I shall be man enough never to say an impatient word about Mrs. Dana, who is far too good for me to criticize."

"Don't make rash promises, Hugh," said Ethel, with a light of mischief in her eyes. "You will do your best, I will do mine, and we will learn anew the fifth Commandment. We'll forgive one another now and ask God's blessing, and try to be good."

The two ladies in the nursery, watching with delightful eyes the little one, who, though wan and languid, bore no other trace of his sudden attack of spasms, were also exchanging pledges.

"Mrs. Dana," said Madam Mainwaring, "I am going to South Dakota to visit my sister Emily, whom I have not seen in twenty years. The journey is long and expensive and I shall not return for two years. I have had my eyes opened. Dearly as I love my son Hugh, I cannot stay here any longer just now, to make trouble between him and his wife. I have been a troublesome old woman, and I am sorry. This dear baby, though, pulls at my heart-strings. How shall I give him up for such an age?"

"Madam Mainwaring," answered Mrs. Dana, "I have a cousin in San Francisco, a Cousin Belle, who has had a heap of trouble, lost her mother and her husband, and is drifting into nervous prostration. She needs somebody to

stand by her, without an hour's delay, and I'm the only one who can go to her relief. I can't make up my mind to stay away from this blessed baby two years, but I'll stay one year, and suppose you do the same. Let us meet here again on Ethel's birthday a year from now."

THE TREASURE MYRTLE FOUND

THERE is not much amiss. Only tension and fatigue. Entire rest for four months," said the great doctor positively. "That is at present my only prescription for you, Miss Myrtle."

The young girl looked dismayed.

"Do you mean, Dr. Ellison," she exclaimed, "that I am not to use my eyes at all, not the least little bit, neither to read, nor to sew, nor to write a letter, nor even to play my scales? Why, what shall I find to do? I thought you would fit me with glasses, and that I should go on just the same as ever, always busy. I haven't the gift of being idle and happy. Doctor Ellison, I shall be wretched, and so will be everybody else around me."

"Miss Myrtle," the doctor answered gravely, "I think I can enter into your feeling of surprise and distress. To a young woman four months seems like a large section of eternity. But we live just one day at a time, and the weeks will slip by before you know it. I advise you to go to the country, to some quiet place in the mountains, some little farmstead or other, where you can walk through fields and lanes, and sit down under trees, and gaze into depths of green leaves and over velvet carpets of green grass. Go to such a place as your father and I were raised in, away back in Vermont, and spend one summer of your life in silence and dreaming. The defect of the education of the period, Miss Myrtle, is that it is robbing our girls of repose, one of the finest and sweetest elements of character. You will have a splendid opportunity to acquire it, my dear."

Myrtle Bennett's dark eyes had filled with tears as she listened to the doctor, but she bravely brushed them away,

and even smiled faintly as she laid her shining gold piece on the table, and took his hand to say good-bye.

"I am not to be afraid of losing my sight permanently?" she asked, pausing in the doorway of the office.

"You are to be afraid of nothing, Miss Myrtle. As the old prophet said ages ago, you are to trust and not be afraid. I will stake my reputation against your recovery, my child, if you have the strength of will to obey my orders literally for the period I have named. Remember, too, that the case might have been far worse. You are not ordered to lie still in a darkened room; you may go about freely. You must only refrain from anything like use of those tired-out eyes. I wouldn't be sorry to hear that you had taken to the nursery hours of bedtime and rising, by the way. Keep up your courage, Myrtle; you come of a stiff stock which has never shown the white feather. And, one word more, you are not to put a veil on, not once, all summer."

Myrtle passed out into the clear sunshine and down the street, a disappointed girl. She had so many plans for the season before her; plans of study, of practice, of enjoyment. It seemed to her as if four idle months stretched on and on, an interminable desert waste; how should she adjust her life to such a period of inaction. As she went slowly up the white marble steps of her father's house, and turned the latch-key, there came over her as never before a sense of the inadequacy of money. There was plenty of that in her purse and in her home, but millions would not rest her eyes. The doctor would have given precisely the same prescription to Jennie Wells, at that moment stitching in her mother's sewing-room.

Myrtle paused on the way to her mother, to say good-morning to Jennie, who was a favorite in the family. She noticed that Jennie was pale and haggard, but the wan face brightened as Myrtle spoke pleasantly.

"Jennie, do you know that Doctor Ellison is sending

me off to be hidden in the country all summer long, and he has forbidden my reading and my embroidery, and everything I shall have to look at; I'm to be a drone for four months."

"That doesn't sound so dreadful, Miss Myrtle," said the weary little seamstress. "Besides, you can afford it. If a doctor told me that, I couldn't mind him, yet I'm sometimes so tired I'd almost like to lie down and die."

"You are a good deal too tired to sit at that machine another minute," was Myrtle's unexpected reply. "Shut it right up, and fold that work away until tomorrow. Now sit back in the rocking-chair and put your feet up and take a nap. Yes, you shall do as I say, Jennie, and I'll make it right with mamma. If I am to be forbidden to use my eyes in my own service, I must make it my business to do what I can with my mind's eyes, and they show me that you need a bit of Doctor Ellison's wisdom."

Cheered already by this demonstration of kindness to another, Myrtle went on to her mother, who put down her book and looked wistfully at her daughter as she pushed aside the heavy silken portiere, and coming forward, knelt down and laid her head in Mrs. Bennett's lap. The mother had not been quite unprepared for the oculist's opinion, and she had dreaded its effect on her impetuous child.

It was natural that Myrtle should cry a little, as she began to talk to Mrs. Bennett, but she pulled herself together resolutely before many minutes passed, and told her mother what she had to expect.

"My dear," said Mrs. Bennett, as the doctor and Jennie had said already, "it might be worse. You have no suffering to endure—you are merely condemned to partial inactivity, which is a cross for one of your temperament, but really, my darling, it may be a blessing to you in the end." Myrtle laughed.

"That's what the doctor said, mamma. Well, where shall I go?"

"To Aunt Lanissa's at Woolscombe Hollow, of course." Mrs. Bennett considered a moment, "I wish I could spend the summer there with you, Myrtle, but your father must go abroad, and Milly and I must go, too. I wonder whether Doctor Ellison would not recommend travel for you. That would pass the time agreeably, and I could look after my girlie myself."

To people like the Bennetts, going abroad is one of the incidents of every-day experience; they cross the ocean as if it was an inland ferry, and Myrtle already knew Paris and London as she did New York. So she said very naturally:

"It would be more of a change, mother dear, and I fancy more nearly what my eyes need, to go to Vermont. Could I not take Jennie Wells along?"

"As your maid?"

"Not precisely. As my friend and companion. She could read to me, keep me mended up, and write my letters from dictation. Jennie has been with us all so much and is so refined and gentle that I would not mind her reading your letters and father's to me, when they came. I could pay her enough to let her leave home without loss to the people there, and such a summer would do her a world of good. Jennie looks very thin and peaked."

"Well, we'll think it over. It would be a boon to Jennie, and all the more so that she would be doing you a real service and paying her way. I think, on the whole, I would prefer to send Jennie to Aunt Lanissa's with you rather than a servant. The dear old lady is afraid of what she calls the upsetting ways of city servants."

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In the sunny south chamber at Aunt Lanissa's old homestead Myrtle found herself before long, comfortably established for her rest-cure. Her room had six windows, white-curtained and ribbon-looped; a cool, gray matting covered the floor, and the old-fashioned four-poster and the solid

mahogany furniture were not put out of countenance by the divan, with its dozen soft cushions, the pretty modern desk, and book-shelves, and the low willow rocker, which Mrs. Bennett had sent up from town for Myrtle's especial comfort. Although she might not read, there was no prohibition against her listening to reading, and Jennie Wells, who had been famishing for books her whole life, was more than happy to read aloud every day. The two girls wandered about in the woods, went to the meadow where the men were plowing or sowing as it might be, and grew strong and rosy in the fresh mountain air.

"There'll be nobody to play the organ in church this morning," said Aunt Lanissa, sorrowfully, one Sunday, as they sat at the breakfast table. "Eben Piper's ill, and our singing is poor enough even when he's there to play. The minister'll be discouraged. We've got some city folks around town now, and it's too bad; they'll not want to come again. City folks, anyway, like to take a vacation when they come to the country, so far as church going's concerned. That wouldn't matter if our own girls and boys weren't so ready to follow their example."

"You haven't many young people in this community, anyway, Mrs. Birkett," said Jennie. "Folks seem to me to be mostly gray-headed men and women and middle-aged ones who look as if they had settled down to a day's work, and children growing up. And there are a good many houses all locked and barred and deserted, and places with weeds rioting up to the front doors around this countryside. My! When I think of the crowds on our Avenue on hot summer nights, and the little tenement rooms swarming with children, three and five and seven sleeping in one little bit of a cell, and then see these empty houses, it puzzles me. Things seem misfits somehow."

"Our young people go to town," said Aunt Lanissa, "as soon as they are their own masters. And as for those shut-up houses, it's this way: The young people have all

gone off and the old people have all died off. And the places are falling to pieces, for a house wears out awfully fast when it isn't lived in."

"I'll play the organ, auntie," said Myrtle, who had been silent during the conversation. "I'll help the pastor out to that extent if I can do no more."

"Won't it hurt your eyes?" said Aunt Lanissa, anxiously.

"Why, no, dear. I can play with my eyes shut, if Mr. Sinclair will choose the old tunes that I know and tell me their order beforehand. And Jennie must sing in the choir today. Jennie sings like a thrush, Aunt Lanissa; she has a sweet, silvery voice, very true and firm. She hardly ever flats."

The buckboard was always promptly at the door on Sunday mornings, for Aunt Lanissa had four miles to drive to the church, and the colt, a frisky creature twelve years old, was supposed to take his time on the Lord's Day. It would have looked unseemly to drive fast had the colt been minded to trot, so Aunt Lanissa and her girls poked along over the quiet back road, bordered with pollard willows and maple trees, and soberly plodded through winding lanes where wild roses and violets bloomed. The sweet, clean, green country never looked purer and holier to Myrtle than on a Sunday morning, and she forgot that she could not read Bible or hymn book while Nature's broad pages were spread open before her eyes.

On the way to church they passed one of the abandoned farms which had awakened Jennie's interest. It gave a touch of familiarity which rather jarred on the scene, when Jennie read aloud as they drove by:

THIS PLACE FOR SALE
Apply to Rule & Devon, Park Place,
New York

"That's the house. I'd like to buy it," said Myrtle, musingly.

"Buy it!" exclaimed Aunt Lanissa in great amazement. "And pray what would you do with it when it was bought?"

"Oh," returned Myrtle, "I should have a party. I have always wanted to give a party all by myself. I might have a house party or a dozen house parties if I only owned that lovely old place."

"Why don't you then, Myrtle?" asked her practical aunt. "It can be bought cheap. But there—we're violating the fourth Commandment. The Lord's Day is no time for discussing worldly affairs. Jennie Wells, when we go home we'll drive by the other road and we won't be tempted. But we'll come back here tomorrow, and I'll get the keys from the postoffice, Myrtle, and then we'll see." She gave Myrtle's hand a little motherly pat, and Myrtle's gray glove squeezed the black lace with a very loving pressure.

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Eben Piper was ill, and the minister had made up his mind that he could have no music; but when Myrtle offered herself as a substitute she was joyfully accepted, and never had the wheezy old organ been half so well played as on that Sunday morning, for music is always more dependent on the player than on the instrument, and Myrtle's gift was in her soul as well as in her finger-tips. As for Jennie, she could sing; and the congregation, following the lead of the two girls, poured out their hearts in "Old Hundred" and "Rock of Ages" and "Maitland," till the whole simple service was tender and sweet beyond its wont.

"One need not be altogether useless if she can play," said Myrtle on the way home.

"I am so glad to hear you say that," Aunt Lanissa answered, "for I began to think you never meant to touch the piano again."

"Yes," added Jennie, "and Miss Myrtle is such a fine

performer; she knows how to bring music out of anything from a banjo to an organ. She's just fine."

"To keep up one's music in a scientific way is a serious thing," said Myrtle, "and you must know I've been a real student, and have worked very hard. I've always felt a contempt for people who ran over the keys for mere pleasure, and played by ear, and cared for little catchy tunes, but since I've been idle and had more time to think I've somehow had it shown to me that it's a good thing to give one's friends pleasure even if the music is not classical. I can play in the dark, and as I've said, with my eyes shut, and though it wouldn't satisfy a master, it may pass with you, dear auntie."

"Yes, girlie, you'll sit right down when supper is over and give me 'Mary to the Saviour's tomb' and 'Naomi' and all my old favorites."

The next day dawned in great beauty, and early in the morning, armed with the keys of the house which had attracted Myrtle, the girls set out on a tour of investigation. Mrs. Birkett let them go alone; she and her handmaid, Martha Jane, were much too busy with housewifely duties on a bright Monday, to spend time in wandering far afield. But Myrtle did not care. In fact, she confided to Jennie that it was on the whole as well that auntie had staid at home.

"For," she said, "if I like this house, I'm going straight away to buy it. Aunty would wish me to take time to reflect."

"Won't you write over to your father, Miss Myrtle, for his consent?"

"Why, no, Jennie. I'll not use father's money. I'll take part of Cousin Grafton's legacy. That is my very own to do as I like with."

Jennie, whose pale face had rounded and filled in the country air, but whose purse had always been of the scantiest since she could recollect money as a part of life's

necessities, thought for the twentieth time, how nice it was to be rich. But she did not think it with envy. She knew that Myrtle regarded her money as something to be used for others, and Myrtle was her friend.

"I'll not be foolish, Jennie," Myrtle assured her. "I'll see Squire Dill and let him make the best bargain he can for me, and look into the title and all that, and then if we do get the place, I'll have it cleaned and put in order at once, and our friends from the club shall be asked up here for an outing. And, Jennie, we might persuade your mother to come, and bring Rosy and Ned and the baby. Wouldn't that be a lark?"

Jennie's joy could not express itself in words.

"Oh, Miss Myrtle!" she gasped. "I've been half way to heaven ever since I left New York. If mamsey and the others come here, too, I'll be there entirely."

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It proved possible for Myrtle to buy the house, and in an incredibly short space of time she had it renovated and painted, filled with suitable furniture, and still better, overflowing with guests. Two of her mother's old servants were installed to take care of it and so busy was she and so happy, she never thought that she was neither reading, nor writing, nor working in a single direction which taxed her eyes.

"My days never flew faster," Jennie wrote for her to the mother across the Atlantic. "When night comes I'm so sleepy that I'm off to dreamland the moment my head touches the pillow. Jennie is a very good little secretary. When I don't need her in this capacity any longer I shall look up another such position for her; it will pay better than sewing, and I tell her this is her training time. She is making the most of it."

The summer went by on wings, and Myrtle found that it brought her numerous chances for unselfish ministries. There was old Madame Faunce, who could move her arms

and hands, but was paralyzed from the waist down, and obliged to sit in a reclining chair from morning till night. People called her querulous and sharp-tongued, but Myrtle found her an entertaining companion, when she had established the habit of a daily visit, and could beguile the old gentlewoman into describing her early life in Paris.

The minister's wife had a nursery full of children; their golden heads were like steps, and the little mother grew very weary sometimes with all she had to do, and the care of the minister and half the care of the parish besides. Myrtle would take her aunt's old rockaway, and a hamper of picnic dainties, and she and Jennie and the colt and the parsonage brood would go off to the woods for a whole day, leaving the mother to rest and stillness, and an hour or two to read in peace, or drive with her husband to some out-of-the-way farmhouse on the edge of nowhere in particular.

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When Myrtle returned to New York in the autumn, and went to see her doctor, he looked at her beamingly.

"Young lady," he said, "you are perfectly well. Your eyes have had a rest cure. And I would not be surprised if while they were having it you had discovered that hidden treasure which in this generation most of us are forever seeking in vain."

"What can you mean?" inquired Myrtle, puzzled.

"My dear Miss Myrtle, I mean this, time enough to live; most of us are spendthrifts of time; it is all gone while we are getting ready for our lives. You have had time to be good, and to be happy. Don't lose the fine art, my child, since you have had the good fortune to gain it."

AN OLD SURVIVOR

YEAR after year the roses had bloomed and faded in a little Maryland village, and year after year, ever since the Civil War, garlands of them on Memorial Day had been laid upon the row of soldiers' graves in the little cemetery that stood near the bay. Very peacefully, for more than forty years, side by side, had slept these men-at-arms, some of whom had worn the blue and some of whom the gray. In the little border community, in those old days, families had been fiercely divided in sentiment, and, in more than one place, children of the same mother had been arrayed against one another on crimson fields. But when the war was over, disputes had subsided and kindly feeling had been restored, and today the grandchildren of the soldiers brought their decorative tributes alike to every grave, rejoicing most of all in the fact that Memorial Day brought them freedom from school and a chance for a long, splendid gala day out of doors.

It had been customary for several decades to have a procession and martial music, and to make the day a great occasion; but one year an epidemic had swept through the town and another year had brought a fire, and gradually the votive offerings and special exercises had been left to the children. They took great interest in gathering flowers and adorning the graves, and when they had flowers enough, they lavished them impartially everywhere, so that the little God's acre looked like a real Garden of the Lord.

It was Ruth Endicott who took the initiative one season in a new departure. Ruth was very apt to start something new. She said to a group of boys and girls: "Why

should we not find some old soldier who is alive and carry our flowers to him? The men in the graves must have their share, but why can we not do something lovely for our heroes who are with us yet?"

Her cheek flushed and her eye grew bright as she spoke.

"The trouble," said Emily Lane, "will be to find any of the heroes. Father and mother were talking about it yesterday and they said that nearly all those who fought in the Civil War were gone; that one by one they were being mustered out, and that soon not any of them would be left. We used to see the old comrades marching on Memorial Day, but there are none of them now, and I don't see where we are to find any one in this township to carry out Ruth's idea."

Ruth looked a little disappointed. "Surely," she replied, "there must be somebody in this county who fought in the Civil War." Ralph Edgar was passing with his team and heard the group of little girls as they eagerly discussed the situation. He had been to the mill and one end of his big wagon was filled with sacks of meal, but there was plenty of room in it for another load. "Jump in, girls," he called, as he halted his strong sorrel horses. "Jump in and take a drive with me. I'll show you an old survivor of the war, one you may take flowers to if you like, and any other nice thing you can think of."

The children needed no second bidding. Ralph's kind, sunburnt face, and his honest gray eyes, were a passport to children's favor, and they were accustomed to riding after his horses whenever there was room in his cart or wagon. They passed their own houses on the road out of the village and waved laughing good-byes to their mothers as they rolled merrily through the street, the wheels going round as fast as the pretty thoughts in their bright heads.

"Why, Ralph," said Ruth, "I believe you are taking us

to the poorhouse. Surely none of the old soldiers are living there?"

"Yes," answered Ralph, "one of them lives there. Her name is Aunty Pease."

"Her!" echoed the children. "Her name! Women didn't fight in those days."

"That shows how little you know. Women have always had the worst share in war and the hardest part in all the battles. Aunty Peace was a young girl when the war broke out. Two of her brothers were in the Northern army and two in the Southern. She stayed at home with her father and worked in the fields like a man, and in the house she worked like a drudge, for her mother was sick and never able to lift her hand to her head after her boys went away. All four were killed at Gettysburg. Not one was left to help the old people. Sally Pease was young and strong and clever then, but she grew old and faded and weak and a little stupid before her long tasks were done. You see, children, you don't know much about sorrow. Her mother lived to be ninety, and before she died we had begun calling Sally, Aunty Pease. She had a lover once, but he died when they were both not more than boy and girl, and Sally never cared a mite for anyone after that. She is quite old now and very poor, and I don't believe she has too many comforts in the poorhouse. After her father's death the farm had to go, and it was by hard work that the daughter kept a roof over her mother's head. She is brave though, as brave as any soldier ever was, and she has fought a good fight. She is an old survivor, and I don't know but that you children might bring her some good times if you were to try."

The children alighted very soberly before the door of the almshouse. It was a low, rambling structure that looked comfortable enough in an unpretentious way, and it was as clean as whitewash and paint could make it; but even the children understood that nobody wanted to live

there if it could be helped, and they vaguely comprehended what a trial it must be to such a woman as Aunty Pease to spend her last days there. Ralph led the way, and they were shown into a sunny little room with a rag carpet on the floor, a cot in the corner, and an armchair at the window. A little old woman, very straight, with bright, dark eyes and snow-white hair, was stitching carpet rags and making them into great round balls. She looked up and nodded pleasantly to Ralph, as he brought the children in.

"Aunty Pease," he said, "I have brought some friends to see you."

The old lady smiled, and waved a wrinkled hand at the young visitors, saying, "Sit right down, my dears. Two or three may sit on the cot, and the rest must camp down on the floor. I am glad to see children. It's lonesome here, and so quiet, and I don't know what I'd do some days if it were not that I have my dreams, and that the old times seem more real than these present ones."

The children looked at her curiously. What did she mean by her dreams? They had not lived long enough to enter that realm of fancy in which aged people are so much at home, and they felt a little awe as they saw tears gather in the bright old eyes. But Aunty Pease brushed the tears away. She presently told the children something about the times that were so long ago, and that to her had become more vivid than the present. She told them how their old farmhouse had sheltered soldiers of both armies, how her mother's silver teaspoons had been buried near the house during the entire war, and how a little money, all in bright gold pieces, had been placed there, too. Alas! by some strange happening, the gold pieces and the silver spoons had not been found. "You see," she said, "Brother Benjamin buried them, and there was so much misery that mother forgot just where the place was, and she was the only one that knew."

The children rode home very soberly. They had decided already in their minds that they would take flowers and dainties to Aunty Pease on Memorial Day, that her room should look as beautiful as the soldiers' graves, but Ruth could not be contented, thinking how much good those gold pieces could do were they only to be found, and marveling at the pleasure Aunty Pease would feel could she hold in her hand before she died her mother's silver spoons.

"Ralph," she said, suddenly, "have we passed the Pease place yet? Who lives there now?"

"The Millers lived there until a year ago," said Ralph; "but they have moved away and there's nobody there so far as I know. That's the place just around the bend of the road." He pointed with his whip to a little weather-beaten farmhouse with apple trees just ready to blossom, standing all about it.

When Ruth reached home she drew her father aside and talked with him a long time. He shook his head and seemed unwilling to say yes to her pleading, but finally he went with her a piece up the road to the old Pease farmhouse.

"Daughter, dear," he said, "it would be a fool's errand. Nobody will ever find that buried treasure. You see, child, there is no clue. I presume that they digged the whole farm over to find it and ransacked the earth in all the out-of-the-way corners. It will never be found."

"Well, father," said Ruth, "if I were going to hide a thing that I cared a good deal about I would choose a spot very near the kitchen door. I would make up my mind that people would not be likely to hunt where everybody would see them, and as I was looking at Aunty Pease, something seemed to whisper to me that her brother had put those gold pieces as close to the house as he could. Won't you come anyway and look for them with me?"

The two, gray-haired father and golden-haired girl, walked on together and came to the old Pease house, all boarded up and lonely in the light of the waning sun. The spring had come with tender touches and garlanded doors and windows, and the lilacs were in bloom beside the kitchen porch.

"Now," said Ruth, "if I wanted to hide anything and didn't want anyone ever to find it, I'd choose a place like this, between the lilac bush and the kitchen window. It would be a handy place and so easy for them to go to when the war was over and so public that strangers wouldn't ever look there. What a pity that Benjamin's mother could never remember, for I am sure the box is somewhere among the roots of the old white lilac."

Do the angels whisper secrets to the pure hearts of children, or are they so much nearer heaven than older folk that they have a clearer vision of that which is hidden? Mr. Endicott laughed as he undid the fastenings of the old barn, a very easy matter, and took from thence a spade. He dug a little way down and the spade struck sharply against a metallic object. Full of excitement and as eager as Ruth he continued to dig, and almost immediately bent over and lifted up a tin box, not very large, but quite heavy. Here, after forty years, was the little fortune of Aunty Pease.

The dear old lady did not have to end her days in the poorhouse. Her neighbors bought back the old homestead and gave her its title deeds, with the understanding that when she left that home for heaven the place should be kept as a little asylum for any tired wayfarer in the village, or any weary girl who needed somewhere to lay her head and rest awhile after illness. But as long as she lived Aunty Pease was to stay in her own home. The gold pieces were enough in number to insure her comfort. The silver teaspoons brought to her old face a look of almost radiant youth. The children and their parents vied with

one another in making the old survivor happy, and there were flowers for her as well as for the sleepers in the cemetery on Memorial Day, and flowers there will be in that house so long as it stands.

Emily Lane and Ruth Endicott still differ a little on the question of heroes, but on the whole they are reaching the conclusion that those who stayed at home and were patient, were as heroic as those who fought on red fields of battle. A new note has come into their voices as they sing, "Hail Columbia," "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," "Dixie," and "Maryland, My Maryland," for they are children of America and of the sunshine, and one starry flag waves over their country from coast to coast.

THE EVOLUTION OF BLANCHE TITUS

IT had been a long day and Mrs. Elkins' kitchen had glowed like a furnace, what with the baking and ironing for six, two of whom were young ladies from town, boarding for the summer, and paying a high price to have their laundry work done in the house. Fluted ruffles and puffs and shirtwaists smoothed under the flatiron till they were miracles of daintiness, meant skill and strength paid out lavishly by Mrs. Elkins. Evening was coming fast, and she was pale and tired—tuckered out, she called it, as she hung the last piece on the clothes-horse.

"Some of these things are aired enough to fold," she said, turning to her daughter and fingering the fragrant linen with a practiced touch.

"Oh! mother, no. Do leave them and sit down and take your breath while I mix the bread," cried Florence, getting out the kneading board and bowl, and sifting into it the powdery flour. "I wish we didn't have to take boarders. The Duncans are very nice, but I'm tired of the everlasting work and worry and fret of looking after their wants. Just see them now, cool and comfortable, going off for a spin on their wheels, while we stay here to finish the work made on their account."

"They pay well, Florence," said the mother.

"Why, yes, that is true, but if you have a doctor's bill for pleurisy when winter comes, all because you've gone and tired yourself completely out this summer, the money in the bank will melt away as fast as it did last year. I'm sure it's a mistake, our working so hard. If we could have any help—even a girl from the asylum would save steps."

"No asylum girl for me, Florence," said her mother

with emphasis. "I would take a neighbor's daughter, if I could get her, but there are no living out girls in the neighborhood. And anyway, your father might raise objections."

"Yes, he would, probably," sighed Florence. Then added, resentfully, "Father manages to secure what help he needs in the fields, and any labor-saving machine he fancies. Father doesn't stop to wonder what you would say. Well, I'd like to change places with Miss Caroline and her sister once in a while. Say for a single evening. They are just like the lilies in the Bible, 'they neither toil nor spin.' And we, we just drudge and drudge our lives away."

Mrs. Elkins looked troubled, sighed faintly, sorry for Florence's mood. Then she began to fold the clothes. That at least would not need be done tomorrow. Presently she began again on the subject of hired help.

"Your father, Florence, would not like to let a summer pass without our having somebody here besides ourselves in this big house. He works very hard, often beyond his strength, and he thinks we ought not to be idle."

"Idle!" the girl's cheeks flushed hotly. "Without a cent ever paid for even the washing; without a hand to lift the burden, and all the men who come for the harvesting to cook for, as well as our own family, four of us, two city boarders, and a second table full of hungry men—father does not know what idle means."

There was a low knock at the door.

"Please, Mrs. Elkins," piped up a clear little voice, "let me come and live with you! I'll help you and Florence. Let me fold up the towels and napkins. Aunty has taught me how to work I'll be worth my keep, you'll see, and if you'll only let me stay here, and go to school, that's all I'll ask; no wages, only a place to sleep and my food, and a chance to go to school. I've clothes enough to last a long, long time. I'd not be a mite of trouble and I'll save a lot of steps. Please try me."

The child in the doorway, her gingham sunbonnet hanging by its knotted strings at the back of her neck, was a tall, slender girl of thirteen; her dark eyes lighted a plain, sallow face, in which there was no beauty, though it was very intelligent. She was so much in earnest that without waiting for Mrs. Elkins' answer, she stepped forward and began to fold and pile the clothes with a deftness that pleased that notable housekeeper.

"Why, Blanche!" said Florence, "how can your aunt spare you?"

"Aunty is going to spare me; she can't afford to let me stay with her any longer. She and Uncle Rufus have decided that I must go to town and work in a factory. I can earn three or four dollars a week there, and Uncle Rufus' sister will board me for two dollars and a half. But, dear Mrs. Elkins, my mother was a scholar, and she wanted me to have an education, and I can't go back on her; she'd not like it in heaven. I mean to go through school and college and be a teacher by-and-by. I've come to you first, because you knew mamma, but I'm going to every house in the village and over to the Centre, and out on the West Road, if I have to, till I find somebody who will let me work my way through school. I'll be a great help, if you'll let me come, Mrs. Elkins."

"Blanche, dear," said Florence, "what will your auntie say? Will she give her consent?"

"She'll not oppose me; she knows how I feel. She'd let me stay there and do my best if Uncle Rufus would be willing. But uncle says it's folly, my going any longer to school, and auntie can't stand out against him."

"Come here early tomorrow morning, Blanche," Mrs. Elkins said, glancing toward the veranda where her husband sat smoking his pipe. "I'll tell you positively then whether or not I'll take you on your terms, which are really very generous ones, my child. You ought to be paid something for your services."

"Oh, no! It will be pay enough if I can have a good home and attend school."

Mr. Elkins was a little disposed to grumble when the plan was submitted to him, but Florence frankly told him that unless her mother and herself could have some assistance they would send their boarders away, and he yielded to their wish. Blanche Titus was presently installed as a child of the house, for though she gave a ready hand everywhere, in kitchen, parlor and chambers, she was not treated as a servant, and she fully made good her word that she would be "worth her keep."

"It's surprising how much that willing little maid accomplishes," observed Miss Caroline to her sister one morning late in the autumn, when before going to school Blanche had made the beds, filled the pitchers, and swept the halls and stairs. Miss Caroline and her sister had found the country so delightful that they had lingered there to enjoy the crisp October mornings, and the drives and rides in the mountains, never so exhilarating as in the sweet days on the edge of Indian summer. The house suited these young women, fastidious as their tastes were; it was so spotlessly neat, the beds were so soft and springy, and the table was perfection. Now that the pressure of farm work was somewhat relaxed, Mrs. Elkins and her daughter were not so weary after the daily toil, and Blanche certainly made their lives easier. Her winsome presence was everywhere felt.

The two young ladies watched her walking swiftly down the road to school, her books in her hand. Miss Caroline had helped her with her examples once or twice, and Miss Susan had looked over her composition and given her some hints about her map-drawing.

"She's a singularly bright and clever girl," said the latter; "and I wish we could give her a lift."

"Why can we not?" said Caroline, going to her desk and taking up her pen. "There's that scholarship of Cousin

Leonora's in Ellenborough Institute. I don't think it is filled this year. If Blanche could have that, she could stay at the institute three years and be prepared for college. I'll write to Cousin Leonora at once. Isn't there a special delivery stamp in my purse, Susie?"

"Why such haste, dear? Would you not best consider ways and means?"

"In this case, I think not. I'll act first and consider afterward. If Blanche is to have that particular scholarship I want to secure it for her, provided, that is, that she can pass the needful preliminaries."

"I'll see to that part. I've been watching her progress. She's well grounded in what she has studied, and is very faithful and thorough, and, what I like best, is to observe how nicely she does her housework; she slights nothing; she has a sense of honor and fulfills her part of the contract. Even Mr. Elkins, grumpy old fellow that he is, treats Blanche with respect. He admits that she isn't a shirk. And I do think it has penetrated his consciousness that his wife is better for being assisted."

"Sister," said Miss Caroline, "if we send Blanche Titus to the Ellenborough Institute, we shall have to be responsible for her board and clothing during three years. Are we safe in assuming so much? Ought we not to consult our people at home?"

"Mamma has always insisted on our having a maid."

"True, but if Blanche is at the institute, she ought not to be in the position of an upper servant. The city is different from the country. I don't think it would be the best thing for her, nor could she do more than nominally fill the position."

"Well, perhaps not, but she might be our youthful companion. Then she could have the little room opening out of mine; she would come to our home table at breakfast and dinner, and in return for what we do for her, she could render many small services which would take from

her a feeling of pauperism. She could write our checks, keep our accounts, dust the bric-a-brac, read the paper to father on Saturdays; oh! there would be no difficulty about arranging work for her."

So though Blanche did not yet know her good fortune, cordial hands were extended to her at the very moment when they were needed. God does help those who help themselves.

The Duncan sisters had money in their own right and were to some extent independent. A conference with Mrs. Elkins resulted in their sending to town for such a wardrobe as would be suitable for a school-girl under their care, and a simple, well-chosen outfit was soon in their hands. When Blanche learned that she was to go with them to town, she had no word to express her joy.

"It seems too good to be true," she said; "but I'll study hard and try to pay you back when I'm a teacher."

"You will pay us now, without waiting for that time if you do your best, Blanche," said Miss Caroline; "and when you are a graduate, you may be able to help some other earnest girl. But you will find almost as much to do in our house as you have had to do here, so I don't wish you to think we are giving you something for nothing."

"We shall be lost without you, Blanche," was Mrs. Elkins' declaration. "You have been a second daughter to me and you must always think of this house as home, wherever you are." She gave Blanche a little purse in which there were two five-dollar gold pieces.

"You are not going into the great world without a penny," said the kind woman, kissing her little handmaid good-bye.

Life in the Ellenborough Institute and in the Duncan household was somewhat in contrast with that which Blanche had hitherto led. But the essentials of good breeding are everywhere the same, and our country girl learned

how to enter and leave a room with grace; how to receive visitors; how to take her modest share in conversation. She was quiet, composed, unobtrusive. Mr. Duncan said one day to his wife:

"That child has good blood. She takes to society ways as if to the manner born."

"I almost feel as if I would like to adopt her."

"Not at all, not at all. That would spoil everything. I am watching with interest the problem she is working out. We are helping her to help herself, and that is far better than it would be for us to lift and carry her. But she is gaining more than mere education here. She is acquiring an air of distinction, and of charm."

There were many besides Mr. Duncan who observed the same thing when at the end of her preparatory course Blanche, in the center of the white-robed graduates, modestly slipped forward and gave the valedictory. She had chosen her college, one of New England's most famous and honored, and had successfully passed every examination. The beneficence of the alumnæ had provided several scholarships there, and on one of them Blanche Titus entered, assisted in certain ways by her friends, the Duncans, but supplementing her narrow means by efforts open to college women when they need or choose to make them.

She had been in college only a month when one of the teachers said to her:

"You are more fortunate than many of our students, Miss Titus. You have had an all round preparation for your work. Girls are not always aware that much besides book-knowledge is needful for a college course."

Blanche understood that whatever lay before her in the future, she could meet without dread and with an assurance of victory. To Florence Elkins, with whom she kept up a steady correspondence, she wrote at this time:

"I don't know what your dear mother will say when she hears that I am going one of these days to be a doctor.

I have quite resigned the idea of teaching. Since I came to college I have been taking work in the laboratory and studying biology. I feel a call within me to medicine and I've a strong hope that the way will be opened. God has been very good to me thus far, and friends have been raised at every step. I'm coaching a girl who does not find Greek as easy as I do, and I've undertaken to do the mending of another who never has handled a needle in her life. These girls pay me liberally for my help. The president and faculty are very kind. Of course it's looking quite far ahead to think of the medical college after four years here, but I dare to reach forward; I dare to believe that nothing is too hard for a girl who can work steadily on to a plain objective point, one day at a time."

. . . . . .

I had a letter last week from Doctor Blanche Titus. She is the representative of her college in a mission field on the other side of the globe.

"I have been helped all my life," she writes, "and now I am enjoying the privilege of helping others. It is no easy lot I have chosen, but it is most fascinating in its splendid opportunities of doing good. These poor women are shut into their zenanas and their lives are very dark and bare. I used to think life was narrow and hard on a New England farm, but I tell you, it is rich and luxurious, no matter how hard a woman may toil, in comparison with the lot of a Hindu lady, hemmed in by restrictions, with nothing to think about, no chance to grow, no outlook for this life or the next.

"As a Christian woman I can guide these gentle dark-faced sisters to the better life.

"As a doctor, I have many chances to relieve their body from pain and suffering. I am busy and I think useful, and I am very thankful and happy. The mails bring me dear letters from home, from the Elkins, the Duncans and my college friends, and I know I am loved in the home land. Don't you think I may be called a fortunate girl?"

A BRAVE GIRL

"GIRLS," said Dean Morgan, "I want you to know Miss Lucy Pease. She has just come to college all the way from Iowa, and I hope you will make her feel at home among us."

The Dean went into her office and closed the door. The group of girls in the corridor smiled on their new acquaintance, one of them saying pleasantly, "If you've never been in Winsted before, I'll show you around Elmore Hall. There'll be time before supper. I expect you'll be at our table."

"I don't know," said Lucy Pease, "I'm to wait on the table. I'd much rather cook, but the Dean says there is no chance for that. You see I've to pay my own way."

"Lots of girls do," replied the one who had taken Miss Lucy Pease under her charge. She happened to be the daughter of a Senator, and the class beauty, with plenty of pocket-money and the distinction of a charming manner. Dean Morgan had observed Elsie Raimond in the company when she introduced Lucy, and had felt sure she would do the honors cordially. Elmore Hall prided itself on being democratic. A girl with brains, pluck and ordinary good health, could take care of herself in college if she chose.

"I am not a girl," said Lucy Pease quietly. "I am thirty-two years old. I took my entrance examinations here at Elmore fourteen years ago, before we all moved to Iowa, when father lost his money."

Elsie expressed no surprise. The social tact which was her father's special gift and which endeared him to a wide constituency was hers also.

"If you haven't grown rusty in fourteen years and

have kept up your studies at home, Miss Lucy, you are a wonder. How have you ever done it? They say the standard is raised every year. Why, my father and mother both tell me that when they went to college it was easy compared to what it is now."

"I have taken the examination again and have passed, with only one condition, that is in Greek prose" said Miss Lucy. "But it was harder work than hoeing corn or doing a day's washing."

"I believe you," and Elsie almost stared at the straight, small figure, with golden hair already powdered with gray, twisted into a tight little knob at the back of a large head. Lucy Pease was dressed in a skimpy black alpaca and her shoes were coarse. Her hands were mute witnesses of a life of toil. They were the hands of a woman who had done hard work. A wave of pity went over Elsie. At the same time she privately speculated on the motives that had induced Miss Lucy to come to college. One thing she noticed, that Miss Pease had a particularly sweet, soft voice, with liquid Southern intonations; the voice that belongs to open vowel sounds and slurred consonants. They walked together on the long veranda, and Elsie showed her companion the quarters of the rival literary associations, the Alpha Sigma and the Phi Kappa, and incidentally took her into her own cozy nest, the prettiest room in the Hall.

Lucy admired everything she saw. She had the air of one who has achieved something she had long striven for. The supper bell rung, and Dean Morgan coming toward the girls, said to Lucy: "Your duties will not begin for a day or two. Come in to tea."

Lucy Pease hung back.

"I'd rather not eat with the crowd. I'd like to eat by myself," she murmured entreatingly in an aside to the astonished Dean. "Please, ma'am," she said, in the old-fashioned phrase that falls so sweetly from the Southern tongue, "Oh, please, ma'am, let me eat by myself or in the kitchen. I am not used to a crowd."

"Nonsense," replied the Dean, positively. "You'll not eat in the kitchen at any time; the waitresses have a table of their own in this dining-room. Elsie, you present Miss Pease to the teacher at your table, and see that she gets her supper in comfort."

The newcomer's pale face crimsoned as she was seated between Elsie Raimond and another young girl, both trim and dainty in their white shirtwaists and modish stocks. Suddenly she realized that she looked nearly old enough to be the mother of these gay girls; the arrogance of their youth oppressed her. She sat there, with her red and knobby hands, her homely dress, her tightly knotted hair, self-conscious, and inclined to be hysterical. The room, with its many tables all surrounded by pretty girls, its hum of conversation, its merry clatter, almost whirled around her. Lucy Pease, in her embarrassment, put out her hand to clutch a glass of water, but her eyes were blurred. She upset the glass, and the water spilled and rippled in a stream over the white tablecloth. Without a word, she sprang up and fled from the dining-room, only to discover, in the bewilderment of the strange place, that she had lost her way, and could not find her own room.

She stepped out of an open door, and scarcely knowing whither she went, wandered over the campus, sinking at last upon a bench at the remotest corner of the grounds.

"I may as well go back. I've come here fo'teen years too late," she said, unaware that she was speaking aloud. She did not cry, but there was a lump in her throat, and her heart thumped in her breast. Then, all at once, her purpose that had been shining before her during the slowly passing years, rose up and challenged her.

"What," it cried, mockingly, "you'll give up, and go home and tell the neighbors that you were afraid of the girls, and didn't know how to behave in company? Lucy Pease, your mother'd be ashamed of you if she were alive and could see you. Didn't you always tell her you'd go to

college yet; and now your pa's married again, and given you the chance, Lucy Pease! Lucy Pease!" said the inward voice, "I'm ashamed of you."

"Why, Lucy Pease!"

It was not the inward voice at all, but a familiar home-sounding voice that spoke her name; familiar, though she had not heard it for ten years. She looked up. Coming toward her over the green grass, under the yellowing maples, was a woman of the same type as herself, a woman, small, bent, bright-eyed.

"Miss Kezia! Did you call me?"

"To be sure I did. You didn't expect to find me here, Lucy, did you?"

"I might better say the same, Miss Kezia. You must be paralyzed at seeing me."

"Not at all. You told me a long time ago that you meant to go to college, and I knew you'd do it when you could. Why did you not come sooner?"

Lucy began her story, speaking in a colorless monotone. "When I was ready to enter college, ma died. Then I had to take care of the other children. Pa said, wait two years till Milly is old enough to manage the house, and you can go. But Milly was so pretty and so delicate, I couldn't let her do hard work so soon, and by the time I felt I could, Jack Elderkin came along, and Milly was married to him before you could turn around. Then Paul wanted to go to college, and it was more important for him to go than for me. Besides, we were so dead poor that year pa couldn't keep a hired man, and I worked in the fields as much as in the house."

"But Paul went?"

"Yes, Paul went to the State University. He graduated with honors after awhile, and he's a doctor now. Doing splendidly. I'm so proud of him."

"Then, tell me what came after Paul went?"

"The children kept on needing more and more things,

and I couldn't be spared from home. I just couldn't desert my father. I studied nights and mornings, and tried not to forget a single thing. When Cousin Luther died and left me two thousand dollars, I thought I'd come then, and hire help for father. I'd never been so situated that I could hire help till that time. But father was dreadfully down-hearted, for the farm was mortgaged, and beside he wanted to buy more land. He allowed it was selfish in me to use that money on an education; bein' a woman, and not likely to marry, he thought I might better set the home free. So I did. And then, Miss Kezia, pa met a lady he could love, and he was married last June, and I've come away."

"Did they want you to come away?" asked Miss Kezia in a queer voice, a little choked.

"No, they wanted me to stay and do the work. Mrs. Pease isn't very strong, but I thought mother'd say, I'd done my share, so here I am, and I'm to pay my way mostly by what I can do to help along, if the Dean'll let me stay. It's nice to see an old friend, Miss Kezia."

"Come back to the house and have tea with me, Lucy. You know I'm a teacher here, don't you? Oh, here's Elsie Raimond looking for you."

"I've carried your supper to your room," said Elsie. "You weren't there, and I've been hunting you for the last fifteen minutes."

"I couldn't find my room."

"It is puzzling, so many rooms, isn't it, Miss Kezia?" said Elsie consolingly. "But don't worry. A night's rest will set you up, and the Dean sent word you could be excused from chapel this evening."

It is never quite simple for a woman past thirty to fit into a niche among schoolgirls, as one of them. She is so much farther on the road. Even if she feels as they do, if she is as young as they, under her mask, they do not understand it and shut her out. Kezia, hovering over Lucy

with motherly touches until she was safe in bed, knew more about the future than Lucy could dream, seeing in it the light of her own past. She went to the Dean with a petition.

"Lucy Pease is a heroine!" she began.

"Indeed! Well, that may be, but she has the soul of a mouse, my dear!"

"If you had that thought, why did you encourage her to try this uphill task?"

"Because I am soft-hearted. When I set the difficulties before her, she was resolute; when I said I thought there was no room for even one more self-supporting student this year, her eyes filled with tears and she looked as though she would die on the spot. She told me she had walked a good deal of the way from Iowa to Wisconsin. She didn't mind it in pleasant weather!"

"I knew her years ago. I was the minister's sister in the place where she lived. Lucy Pease is the most unselfish woman in the world, and she loves books as a miser loves gold. She's never had a chance. I want her to have one now, but she'll not succeed in waiting on the table. Let her try cooking."

"It's harder; and what can she do?"

"She can make bread that won't be sour or soggy. Let her try her hand there."

It was so arranged. The girls saw little of the shy student, whose loaves and biscuits were like puffs of snow, and who was seldom seen outside of her classes. She roomed alone, and joined in none of the games and festivities. It was wonderful how well she did her work, tossing it off as if it were play, and expanding with the joy of it. The class grew proud of her. She was its ornament, and did "stunts" that nobody else attempted. But she kept aloof from society, stole in and out of the chapel like a shadow, and made bread day by day, the like of which Elmore Hall had never tasted.

Lucy's people had come from Mississippi, and as her father belonged to the contingent who never got on, they had known a good many changes. Her childhood in Wisconsin had been brightened by the visits of Southern cousins, beautiful, graceful girls and gallant, high-bred men, who satisfied the poetry of her nature, and gave her noble ideals, which the shy, reserved child, kept to herself. Only her mother read her aright, and only she understood Lucy's hunger and thirst for an education. She told her, with almost her last breath, "Daughter, be firm. Carry out your plans." After the family went to Iowa, and the mother died, the Southern cousins ceased to come, though Cousin Luther always wrote periodically to the little girl to whom he later left a legacy. In the Iowa home poverty had been the rule and ease the exception, so Lucy had learned every sort of household work, and of society she had known little, the minister's wife and sister being the only ones who sought her out and tried to help her in her daily tasks. It made Elmore Hall home for her at once when she found Miss Kezia there.

Lucy Pease could not afford to go home for holidays. When the spring vacation came, and most of the students hurried away to their homes, she, with a few others, remained. The great building with its many rooms at this time had its annual cleaning. Lucy went to the matron.

"Couldn't I help clean house, Mrs. Somers?"

The matron looked at her. The small, erect figure was slight but strong, with muscles like whipcord.

"There is scrubbing to do, Miss Pease, and there's cleaning paint, and washing windows, and I need another woman very much. The pay is a dollar a day. But the women I've engaged are colored. You might not wish to work with them."

Lucy smiled. "I won't mind them, if they don't mind me, Mrs. Somers." And she earned her dollar a day. There was good stuff in Lucy Pease. She felt that a gen-

tlewoman cannot demean herself by honest work. The colored women treated her as if she were a princess gone astray, and they were aghast at her undertaking to scrub and scour, but did their own work better for seeing how well she did hers. As for the few girls who were staying over the holiday, they vied with each other in paying Lucy little attentions. One of them said, "She'll be somebody yet, and we'll be telling people we were in college with her when she washed windows and took Latin prizes in the same year."

Yet, but for an accident they never would have known the real Lucy at Elmore. The midsummer term was nearly over, and the whole college in the throes of the annual final exams, when Elsie Raimond was taken down with scarlet fever, and had to be quarantined. It was a peculiarly malignant variety of the disease. Her parents had gone abroad, and there was not a trained nurse in Winsted.

The doctor was about to telegraph to Cincinnati for one, when a quiet little figure in a print gown and white apron stood at his elbow.

"Let me nurse her, doctor, please let me. I know as much about nursing as any hospital nurse you can get. I'm here, and I'm not afraid of the fever. I pulled six brothers and sisters through it one year."

"I ought to tell you, if you are connected with the college," said the physician, looking keenly into the alert, eager face, and at once giving this woman his confidence, "that this will be a long illness, and likely a slow convalescence. If you are a student, you may miss a good deal of time, maybe you'll miss a year."

"Never mind that, doctor. I waited a good while before I came, and I'm not afraid of a tough job. Let me nurse Elsie. I want to, because she is so pretty."

She won her point. In the fierce battle that followed, she watched, and struggled, and fought as only the born

nurse can. She put aside her ambition, her books, her hope to graduate, and took care of Elsie Raimond, and Elsie Raimond recovered, thanks to the Lord and Lucy Pease.

"You called that girl a heroine," said the Dean to Miss Kezia, "and I doubted you. Now I call her a saint."

The years drifted by as years do. When the day came on which Elsie Raimond and Lucy Pease were graduated, Lucy gave the valedictory. No one of the whole class had so many bouquets. No one so much applause. The quiet little woman was the most popular member of the class.

"I'm coming back," she said happily, to the Dean, "after my vacation is over, to see if you haven't some steady work for me, if it is only bread-making. I would like to spend the rest of my life here, and I will if I can."

Even as she spoke, a letter was placed in her hand. It was from home. "Come back, Lucy," wrote her father, "come as quick as ever you can. Your ma has had a stroke. We want you."

So she went back and carried sunshine to the invalid and the worried father. But later on, when God made the way plain, Lucy did return to the college she loved, and married a gray-haired professor, and became the guardian genius of many young girls.

MOLLY JENNER'S WAY

"YOU have nothing to say to me, Mary?"

"I have nothing to say."

"You know you are unfair, dear. I put the money where I thought it would be safe. I bought that stock for Susan. Who had any fear about Midvale Bank ten days ago? You act as if I'd planned to lose the money, as if you thought me a thief, as if, God help me, Mary, after livin' with me 'most thirty years, you hated the sight of me."

The wife's face was set like a mask. Her large eyes looked at Ephraim Jenner, as if they did not see him. Her lips were tightly shut. In her view Ephraim had committed the unpardonable sin. He had been a large stockholder in the Midvale Bank, investing there the savings of many toiling years, and now the bank had been hopelessly wrecked by a dishonest cashier. Word had come to the farm so suddenly that it had stunned both husband and wife, but the man regained his courage first, while the woman was wrapped in a tongue-tied despair. She had not addressed a word to her husband of her own free will since the news came. She moved about the house like a woman under a spell. The atmosphere around her seemed freezing, though the weather was hot and dry, the earth hard-caked by drought, the grass burned to a crisp, and the stubble brown and brittle under the feet.

"Aren't you going to see Susan graduate, mother?" said Ephraim, speaking again after a pause, in which the silence was so emphatic that the clock ticking in the corner of the living room sounded in his ears as if every

vibration had the snap of a whip. "You'll surely go, won't you?"

No answer.

"Mary Jenner," the man persevered, a dull red deepening in his sunburnt cheek, "you've got to answer me. Are you, or are you not, goin' on the train this noon to Waterford so as to be at Susan's commencement tomorrow. The child will be looking for you, Mary."

"I can't help it. I've no heart to go."

"You ought to go, for Susy's sake."

"I won't go, Ephraim."

"Susy'll be hurt."

"She'll be worse hurt when she comes home and finds we're packing up for the poorhouse, when she finds what fools we've been, all our eggs in one basket. Don't talk to me, Ephraim," and the pent-up passion now poured itself forth in a rush. "Don't talk to me! S'pose I'll go to Waterford College and make a show of myself, now that I can't ever hold my head up among the neighbors, now that the farm'll have to be mortgaged? I wish I was dead, that's all!"

"Others are almost as badly off, Mary."

"That doesn't help us."

Her pale face settled back into iron lines. Her husband sighed, and the sigh was almost a groan. A sanguine, easy-tempered, happy-hearted man, he could not understand his wife in this mood. Vaguely he had comprehended that she loved money, that the pride of her life was in getting on, and having plenty to leave to Susy, in some far-off future, when she should be done with working and saving. Susy had been finely educated. Her mother had kept Susy's hands white and soft, though her own were hard. Four weeks ago Susy's graduating gown, all ruffles and frills, and tucks and puffs, a dainty, filmy muslin with pipings of satin and flutings of ribbon and a broad sash, had been sent to Waterford by express. What

pleasure the mother had taken in that gown. She had been lavish beyond her wont. It had expressed a mother's pride and gratified a mother's vanity. She had written to Susy that she must be photographed in that dress.

"It couldn't be prettier if Susy were goin' to be married," she had said to herself, gloating over the delicate costume with a complacency odd in so self-contained a woman. "I don't believe the Governor's daughter'll look any finer than my Susan," she said, as she wrapped it in the tissue paper and tied up the big box. With a throe, the habit of economy had asserted itself when the box was fairly gone. But the expense of Susan's brave apparel could be met by extra plainness herself for the next six months, and Ephraim could manage with his old suit another year. Susan would be needing pretty things straight along of course.

Nobody ever looked twice, the mother argued, at old people like Ephraim Jenner and herself; but Susan, nineteen and a beauty, what could be denied Susan!

All this had happened and been settled before the crash came. It was ancient history. Mrs. Jenner felt as if she had lived a hundred miserable years since the bank failed. Ephraim had said she seemed to hate him. In the depths of her angry, aching, unreasonable soul, she did, for the time, hate him. She owned it to herself savagely, a contemptuous sneer behind the words. For conscience was not dead, and she knew that Ephraim was not to blame. Midvale Bank had seemed to them both a sort of Gibraltar. But she was railing at fate, at her husband, and at God.

Ephraim had gone out, closing the door gently. His wife did not glance after him, nor make the slightest effort to clear away the breakfast table, nor put the house in order. Crumbs, unswept, had been lying on the carpet for days. A hen strayed in from the yard, a thing unprecedented in Mrs. Jenner's housekeeping, finding its way through the door opposite the one by which Ephraim had

left the room. The hen loitered about, picking up crumbs. Mrs. Jenner did not notice. She rocked to and fro, her eyes on her lap. An hour passed. The hen strolled out again into the sunshine. Mrs. Jenner still sat in idleness, rocking aimlessly.

Her husband came back. Heavily but hurriedly he crossed the kitchen to their chamber, which was on the same floor. Presently he stepped out in his shirt sleeves, and went to the boiler on the big stove for a dipper full of warm water. He shaved and put on his Sunday suit. The hired man, who lived down the road a piece and came by the day, had harnessed old Ned. Ephraim called him, and gave him some directions. Then he came into the room.

"Mary, I'm goin' to Waterford to see Susy graduate. Won't you come with me? Think how disappointed she'll be, if neither of us is there. Her great day, too. Mark Trevor's going by the noon train. He stopped at the gate a while ago, and told me he'd ordered flowers for Susy. I told him to order some for you. I gave Mark the money to pay for them, Mary. You'd be sorry when you thought it over, if Susan's commencement was not as nice as any of the other girls. Mark's broke ground for his new house, Mary. We'll not have Susy so very long."

"Ephraim, you're trying to coax me. But I won't be coaxed. It was just like you to spend money on such foolishness when we're ruined. We may want it for bread yet."

"Will you drive with me to the depot, Mary?"

"John Hubbell can drive with you."

"John's got the other work waiting. I want you. Come along, and bring Ned home again."

It was his little ruse to persuade her into the air. She saw through it and went just a bit too far.

"I'll oblige you," she said; "but don't talk to me on the road. I have no patience with such a fool."

She put on her sunbonnet. Ephraim helped her into the buggy but did not speak. He kept his eyes fixed on the

horse, and on the long dusty road, baked yellow in the blazing heat. The match had touched the fuse at last. He was resentful now, but it was not his way to explode. Mary saw a gray set jaw, a stern expression, strange on that usually gentle face, and she noted the strength of the hard, gnarled old hands that held the reins. She looked at him, her own mood softening. When blue eyes kindle they smoulder. She knew that Ephraim's eyes in his rare anger were like coals, and though she thought herself as wrathful as ever, she was afraid, her wrath was as the crackling of thorns under a pot to the depth of his, once started. The slow to anger are harder to be won than a beleaguered city.

At the station, Ephraim stepped down and handed her the reins.

"Drive straight home," he said, briefly. "There's goin' to be a shower."

Country custom did not require a husband to raise his hat when taking leave of a wife, but Ephraim had never before gone for a night without saying, "Good-bye, dear. Take care of yourself," without a tender look. This was the first unhappy parting in thirty years.

Ephraim tramped heavily into the station, and bought his ticket. Originally he had not intended to go to Waterford, though his affection for his only child was as pervading and assertive as her mother's. He had always adored Susy, and she was the apple of his eye. But they had all along planned it that Mary would go alone to commencement, and that Susy would understand how hard it was for both to leave home at once in midsummer.

Mary drove back as fast as she could urge the fat and lazy horse, for the hint of a shower had become a menace. She thought she heard the rumble of the outgoing train, but it was possibly thunder, and that terrified her. She had a half insane horror of a thunderstorm. Fast as she drove, the black clouds seemed to hurry after

her. Brave in many ways, she was a coward in an electric storm, and Ephraim knew it and had not this time cared. For thirty years he had indulged her when the summer tempests fell, humored her whims and caprices about shutting windows and locking herself up in dark closets, chafing her hands when they grew cold, holding her head against his faithful breast, soothing her with soft phrases.

He would croon over her, "There! there! hush! hush! it's goin' by. You're all right." She had been thus cared for, thus sheltered, a thousand times. It was one of the little things she had not known to be a great thing.

Today, as she drove home alone, the old terror leaped on her like a panther from a thicket. It gripped her furiously. A great lump came strangling into her heart. As she turned in at her gate, and headed Ned to the barn, John, the hired man, came to take the horse. He grinned fatuously.

"Well, Mrs. Jenner, I promised Mr. Jenner I'd look after things, but I never thought he'd leave you, with a cyclone maybe comin' up. Better hurry in! It's goin' to be a big blow this time, sure!"

Blinded with tears, choking with sobs, frightened half to death, Mary Jenner threw herself on the lounge in the sitting-room, sunbonnet and cape falling on the floor. As John had said, there was a big blow. The house rocked. The trees by the garden gate bent before the gale. The worst storm of the season had arrived.

In the tumult of her abject fear, and the physical distress that bowed her as if on the rack, Mary Jenner forgot her grievance, and the spirit melted out of her utterly. What did she care for lost money? She knew she was dying!

A ball of fire ran over the dried and faded lawn, flashed into the cellar beneath her, struck up through the floor, and hurled itself out again through the window. The old clock fell with a tremendous clamor and noise. For Mary

Jenner, time and the things of time ceased to be. She fainted, and lay on the lounge in merciful oblivion to all that was going on.

She came to herself, was it five minutes later, or ten years, and strong arms were about her. A voice sweet with the tender love of a lifetime, spoke familiarly. No, this was neither heaven nor the judgment day. It was Mary Jenner's kitchen.

"There, there, dearie! Hush, hush, the storm's most over. I'm here with you. You're all safe, Molly. I'm here!"

"Ephraim!" she murmured, "Ephraim!"

"Just your old bear of an Ephraim, Molly. Poor girl! The storm nearly killed you, didn't it? Poor little Molly!"

She looked up. The faithful blue eyes were smiling into hers. The dear hands were smoothing her forehead. She tried to sit up, but fell back. She smiled. The storm was passing. A sunbeam slanted over the carpet.

"Lie still!" said her husband. "You lie still, dear."

"You came back, Ephraim?"

"Of course I came back. The train was late. I saw the storm was going to be worse than I thought, a regular out an' outer, so I hired Joel West to come out of his way and leave me here. He'll do anything for money, you know, Mary."

"Oh, Ephraim, don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't mention money! I've been getting to love it! It's just as well ours is lost, considering the day of judgment! Oh, Ephraim, forgive me. I've been so horrid, and—won't you kiss me?"

The wife made her plea half timidly, but the husband gathered her close to his heart, and their lips met in a kiss of perfect love and pardon. Mary had found out that money was not everything.

That evening, together, when supper was cleared away,

they swept and dusted the disorderly house. Very early next day, in the freshness of the rising dawn, they caught the train for Waterford.

The Governor and his wife were present, for the occasion was doubly a function for them, as their daughter received a diploma, and the Governor made an address. But Susan Jenner had the valedictory, and two prouder people than the plain-looking couple, who watched her every movement with adoring eyes, were not in the crowded building that day. A new peace had crept over Mary Jenner's face, and she looked younger than she had in years.

"Good stock, those Jenners!" said the Governor to his wife. "They've lost nearly all they have in the world in that Midvale Bank trouble, but did you see how serene they were, how dignified? You can't down Americans. I tell you, Sarah, that's a clever girl of theirs. I hope Dorothy'll keep her as a friend."

"You are such a dear, sentimental fellow," said the lady, squeezing the Governor's arm, as they were seated in their carriage, "that I'll tell you a secret. Dorothy says that Susan Jenner is engaged to Mark Trevor, the young man who's going to be your private secretary."

"A young man with a career before him! Good!" said the Governor.

Susan had anticipated some opposition from her mother. Mrs. Jenner had reckoned a good deal on having some years of Susan's company.

"But, mother," she said, when they had their first confidential talk after she was settled at home, "you and father were just the age of Mark and me when you were married."

"Girls used to marry younger than they do now, Susy."

"You waited a good while for me, didn't you, mother?" Susy was sitting in the moonlight in her own room, looking very sweet and childish.

"A good while, daughter; but they were happy years. Your father was always good."

"Yes," said Susy, "daddy is good, good. Do you think, mother, there's any chance at all that he'll ever recover from the bank?"

"I don't know, Susy, and I don't worry. Notice, child, I don't worry. Ephraim and I are both spared, and I've had an awakening."

THE CATNIP WOMAN*

"THEY call me the Catnip Woman," she said, while a smile lit up her face. She had taken off her plain Shaker bonnet and laid her long cloak over a chair, and had given me the little basket which she had brought with her down the long hill road. When I opened it I saw two or three articles tempting enough to delight an epicure and dainty enough to please the most fastidious housewife. There was a pound of golden butter; beside it a box of lucent honey in the comb, and wrapped in a white napkin; completing the gift was a loaf of such brown bread as I had praised when, several years before, I had been a guest at the hospitable board of the Mount Lebanon Shakers. Bread and butter and honey! Are they not the requisites for a feast? My friend has passed many years of her quiet and beautiful life as a member of the tranquil community who have their home on a hilltop overlooking a wide range of country, well timbered, well cultivated and inhabited by good people whose homesteads can be seen nestling among orchards and fields, as far as the eye can discern.

"Why do they call you the Catnip Woman?" I inquired. It seemed to me that she might better have been called after a garden flower or a wild rose than after this humble denizen of pasture lands and fields. She explained. I will put the explanation into my own words.

The Shaker people, following, I suppose, the example of early Christians, have no single possessions of their own. Everything goes into the common fund. They live in celibacy and are called brothers and sisters. They unite on the Sabbath in their morning worship and they have an

*This charming sketch was written shortly before Mrs. Sangster's fatal illness.

agreeable family life. The men and the women alike work and work hard, the tasks being subdivided. The sister who was talking with me had charge of a large dairy, cared for the milk, cream and butter, and rose the year round as early as five in the morning. I knew the immaculate cleanliness of her dairy and the scrupulous nicety with which every detail of her work was carried out, and I also knew how severe and ascetic was her entire life. I had been entertained in her room and had there seen the austerity softened by her books and plants and the reading matter which she enjoyed. The Christian Herald had long been her favorite paper, and she subscribed for it herself. From time to time she had shared in its benefactions, sending her contributions to sufferers from earthquake or famine or to Mont-Lawn when the opportunity came. Understanding that the members of her community had little spending money and went, when they required clothing or other essentials, to the heads of the family, very much as children go to parents, asking and receiving what was necessary, I had desired to know where this bountiful soul obtained what she wanted for her little luxuries and her larger charities. This was why she went out and gathered catnip, finding a market for it in a Massachusetts town and spending the money thus earned in the personal ways she chose. Not all of it, however. A certain share was devoted conscientiously to the community funds. She said with the same irresistible laugh of amusement in reply to my inquiry as to the uses of catnip: "Why, my dear, catnip has a dozen uses! Everybody who has a cat must have catnip. It is the finest thing for babies. All old-fashioned people will tell you that catnip tea is very soothing for fretful little children, while it never can do them any harm; and when grown people are nervous and cannot sleep, there isn't a thing in the world that soothes them like a cup of hot catnip tea just before they go to bed. It is a wonderful nerve tonic. I mean to give you some,

though I don't think you can be nervous. Still, it may do you good. I will tell you just how to make the tea, and you must sweeten it with loaf sugar.

"When I go to gather my catnip, I know all the best places where it grows. I generally take a little girl along with me, for I enjoy talking with children and I like to have the children I am interested in learning all about the woods and the fields. We come on the most charming surprises sometimes. There are places where the wild bees make their honey, and I have found them out, and more than once I have suddenly discovered a hen that had stolen her nest and felt herself perfectly safe because she had wandered away from the place where she should have been. You sit down in the woods sometimes, and you hear the birds singing just as if they were pouring out their little hearts in a flood of perfect joy. The squirrels are very friendly. They don't mind me in the least, and when the rabbits scurry past it isn't because they're afraid. It's only their way. I gather my catnip in meadows and pastures, and I cut long stalks and lay them out even to dry, and when I carry it in to the man who buys it, it is perfect; every stalk and flower and leaf free from dust, and fragrant. I love every bit of it. It is my recreation, for I never go to gather my catnip until every bit of my real work is done, and I have an hour or two to spare. One of my rules is that you must put work before play. I give good weight and measure, and when my catnip is put in the druggist's window, he is proud of it and so am I. Then I portion out my money and it makes me happy to think that some of it will help a poor little famished city child to get two whole weeks of beautiful life in the country, with milk and eggs and wholesome food and fresh air, and that some of it may go far across the sea to the Chinese or the Hindus or whoever else happens to be starving at the time I send it, and that part of it will bring me every week in the year a visit from the paper they print in the Bible House, letting me sit down on Sunday after-

noon and have a talk with you and with the rest of the people who do not have to look after milk and butter, and so have leisure to write for busy women like me to read."

I smiled in my turn. I wondered whether the Catnip Woman, bless her! considered me a person of leisure and herself a busier woman than I. Everything depends on the point of view. I wonder again what the sister will say when she reads her story on this page. I am venturing a little, but not very much, in telling all the many other busy women about her talk with me. I am reasonably certain that there are few idlers among the women who gather about our Christian Herald hearth from week to week. Some of us are notable housewives. Perhaps we have even taken prizes for the excellence of our bread and cake at the county fair. Some of us have our hands full with the family sewing and mending. Then I look at a heaped-up mending basket with a vast amount of respect. It is the symbol of a mother's never-ending industry. Some of us are on committees for clubs and hospitals and neighborhood settlements. A few of us have a great deal of money and it taxes our powers to act as stewards for God in its distribution. We have seen how wisely and well the rich women of this land have recently administered their great estates in doing good here and in other countries. The women who plan and execute munificent charities, who build better homes for the poor, who fight tuberculosis and strive to bring about improved sanitary conditions in congested quarters of the town, those who endow colleges and assist foreign missions, work in their way with precisely the same spirit that is shown by my Catnip Woman. Women realize that what they do must be done quickly. There are seven days in the week and twenty-four hours in the day, and sixty minutes in each hour. We women are thrifty of time, and so we have learned that we may properly take time for rest and for play, if our tasks are well done.

There are other sisters in the little Shaker Community where my friend lives. They address one always by her Christian name, and use as a matter of course the form "Yea" and "Nay," instead of "Yes" and "No." The simple language falls pleasantly from their lips. There are women here of gentle birth and breeding, and among them are women of liberal education who have chosen for one or another reason this life of partial withdrawal from the world. On occasion they go away and pay visits to their friends, and they have as much interest in the happy marriage of young people whom they know, as have others who have never adopted their peculiar creed. One dear sister said to me, with shining eyes, alluding to a young girl who had been brought up in their community, but who is now a happy wife: "I wish you could see her babies. She is the dearest little mother you can imagine." One sister with a singularly spiritual face and a manner of quiet dignity has a gift for writing, and expresses her thoughts in the choicest style of composition. A book of hers is on a shelf near my desk.

Only a few years ago, at an advanced age, Eldress Anna passed away. She entered the Shaker Community by her own desire in her girlhood, bringing to it her fortune of forty thousand dollars. She was beyond eighty when she closed her eyes in the last sleep. One of the brothers with whom I have long had a pleasant friendship came to Mount Lebanon as a little lad of eight, and is now confidently marching toward ninety. Life goes on so quietly with these good people that they seem to live as the trees do, having few maladies to interrupt the progress of health, and finally falling quietly on sleep. Their community life is an anachronism in our period, and as they are not often recruited from the ranks of the world, a day is coming when their fields and farms must be tilled by other hands.

ALECK CAMERON'S GIRL

"PAW," said Molly's mother, "Molly wants to go over the mountain to that Asheville school."

Paw was sitting by the open fire, his pipe in his mouth. He was a big, raw-boned mountaineer, grave and silent. There were seven sons and one daughter in the family. The daughter, Molly, was the pride of her father's heart and the light of his eyes.

"I reckon we'll have to let her go, if she's set on it, maw," was all that he said, but he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and with the slow, unhurried gait of the mountaineer, went out and up the road a piece. He did not need to put on his hat. It was never off his head except when he went to church, and that was seldom, there being no regular church services in the part of the mountains where the Camerons lived. Once in five or six weeks a preacher came round, and there would be a service, when the lean, gaunt men, and the thin, tired women would walk for miles, or ride on horseback to attend, their children often coming with them. These occasional services were the only gleams of culture that broke the monotony of the isolated life led by the people of Cameron's Creek.

The cabin of Aleck Cameron clung to the side of the mountain like a nest, the color of the woods and hills seemed to be absorbed in its walls of rough-hewn logs. Inside it was comfortable and warm. From its doors one looked into a wide sea of mountains, lifting their rugged shoulders everywhere, and shutting in the little hamlets and clearings as if within a fortress.

Aleck Cameron, blue-eyed, sandy-haired, with the high cheek bones of his Scottish forefathers, came of the strong

stock that, across the sea, bred poets and philosophers. Little learning had been his portion, but he was fond of reading, and the few books he owned had been read many times. Molly inherited his tastes. He had always felt that she would be a scholar if she had the chance, and yet he somehow resented her wish to go away from him, and attend school.

She was hurrying home, a slim girl in a blue cotton frock that fell in straight folds to her ankles. Her dark hair was hidden under a sun-bonnet, and a little gray shawl was crossed over her breast. Molly was very pretty. Her mother had once been pretty, though in her sallow face only the large, soft eyes retained any trace of beauty. Hard work, and a diet of bacon, hot bread, and strong coffee, make havoc of women's looks, in the mountains.

"So, honey," said her father, as the girl came tripping up to him, and slipped her little brown hand within his, "maw says you hanker after schooling. That's because you talked to that preacher's wife so long last Sunday. Would you go and leave us, daughter? I reckon you'd be mighty homesick, and want to come back."

"Yes, paw. I'd be mighty homesick, but I'd stay. It wasn't the lady altogether, paw. I've been a-wanting, an' a-wanting, an' *a-wanting* a chance this long time, an' I'm getting old, paw. I've got to hurry if I'm not goin' to be too late?"

"How old are you, honey?"

"Sixteen," said Molly Cameron. She said it as if she had been sixty. At sixteen girls often feel that they have attained a most mature age, especially girls who live in old-fashioned country neighborhoods, where their friends of eighteen and twenty are mostly married.

"Only, paw, I do hate to ask you to spend the money. But after I've graduated, I'll work hard and pay you every cent. See if I won't."

"Shucks!" said the mountaineer. "I don't want you to

worry over the money, daughter. If maw can have you ready by day after tomorrow, I'll take you to the school, honey. I'm pretty sure you'll have grit enough to stick, once you're thar."

What Molly Cameron suffered from shyness, and strangeness and longing, nobody knows except those who, like her, have found themselves in an environment utterly different from the accustomed one, and in a situation where everything has seemed unreal. Molly's ways were uncouth. She had not been trained to use a tooth-brush, or to eat with her fork. She was not prepared to enter the lowest grade, but she could read and write, and the keys of all knowledge were therefore in her hand. Before long she had discovered the teacher she wanted to be like, and Miss Eliot became the model whom she copied, imitating almost unconsciously her gestures, her dainty neatness, and the refined enunciation and clear tones of her low, sweet voice.

At faculty meeting, when Molly Cameron had been in the school nine months, some one asked which of the three hundred pupils had made most progress since entering.

"Molly Cameron," was the answer, unhesitatingly given. "She has waked up. She is going to be brilliant; she is thorough; she has splendid capacity." Miss Eliot spoke positively.

"Yes, and she is growing very like you," another teacher remarked teasingly.

Virginia Eliot blushed. She was rather sensitive about the habit the girls had of adopting all her little ways. But the president, who was wise and experienced, set her mind at rest with a wave of his courtly hand. He was a true gentleman of the old school, and a born educator.

"Nothing is so fine in education as personality," he said. "We can do nothing so good for our girls as to impress ourselves upon them. But it is a great responsibility."

Gradually Molly's very appearance changed. She had no money for the little accessories of dress that girls prize,

but clean turn-overs and cuffs cost a mere trifle, and a ribbon for the hair that is smoothly combed, may be managed, if a girl has initiative. There were opportunities to earn a little if the girls chose, and Molly was quick to avail herself of these. She helped in the kitchen, overtime. Part of her school work was there, but she gave hours for which she was paid a little. She was a very proud girl when she wrote home to her father that she had earned enough to buy her clothes for the next year.

She was walking across the campus one afternoon, near the end of the summer term, thinking happily that in a few days she would go home for vacation, and see them all again, when a telegram was put in her hand. Alarmed, her hands trembling so that she could hardly open it, she tore the envelope apart.

"Come," it said. "Mother died last night."

Miss Eliot went with her to the terminal of the railway, where a neighbor was waiting with a covered wagon and a team. There she left her. Molly had not shed a tear. The dry-eyed misery in her face touched her teacher's heart. She could not comfort her. As they parted, she said, "Molly, you must be brave. You will have the rest to comfort, my dear."

"I ought not to have left maw. If I had stayed she might be alive now." It was the old, old plaint, as old as earth itself, that love and bereavement are always making.

There was no returning to school next year. Instead, Molly tried her best to fill her mother's empty place, but it was not easy. The mother had pervaded the home, as mothers do. Her simple housewifery had absorbed her life, and no one had dreamed how it had exhausted her. When Molly had the cooking, scrubbing, sewing, washing, and all to do for the boys and her father, she found that it taxed her whole young strength to get through it. She began to grow round-shouldered and heavy-eyed. The slowly moving months dragged along. She was poring

over a Latin grammar by the light of a pine knot, one afternoon in the gathering dusk, when her father, more taciturn now than ever, came in and looked at her.

"Honey," he said, "you can pack your trunk and go to school next year, and finish."

"But no, father. I can't be spared." Yet he saw the flash, not from the fire, that illumined her face.

"Yes, you can, Molly. I'm goin' to be married."

Now she turned pale, and her face took on a resentful expression.

"I've not forgot your mother. I never shall. But you need your own life. I need a housekeeper. Martha Steele will make me a good wife, and she'll take care of the boys. You go back to school, honey."

It was a long speech for Aleck Cameron. He added to it after a moment. "Your mother had a gold watch, honey, and a black silk dress, and a little white shawl. She would have wanted you to have them. I'll put them in your trunk myself. When you are through school, you can be a lady and teach if you like, and you can help me educate the boys. Teddy is a smart little chap." Teddy was the youngest.

Several years later, a traveler passing through the Cameron Creek region saw a little church, its white spire pointing heavenward, and near it a small schoolhouse, with thrifty plants and bright vines around its door.

The hamlet that focused most of its activity around the blacksmith's shop and the store, had an air of clean prosperity formerly lacking. A definite tidiness had taken the place of dirt and disorder. The saloon had vanished.

"Seems to me," said the stranger, "there's an improvement here. You've been forging ahead."

"Right you are," said the blacksmith. "That little girl of Aleck Cameron's, when she came home from school went straight to work. She persuaded us to build the school. Then she started a Sunday school and a singing service in

the school. On top o' that she begged us to build a church. We did. We've got a minister now, an' he preaches every Sunday. Molly Cameron, with the Lord's help," here the old fellow took off his hat, "has, to put it mildly, transmogrified this community. Yes, sir, she has."

Molly Cameron, a tall, gentle girl, was pointed out to the stranger later. He looked at her, noted the firm mouth, the womanly brow, the tender, lustrous eyes, and knew that she and others like her were quietly revolutionizing the land of their birth.

"God bless her," he said. "God help her," and rode out of the mountains. From his far-away home later, he sent an organ for Molly Cameron's church.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS

AS far as the eye could see the world was beautiful in amber, crimson and gold. The trees were gay in their autumn dress, and the fields, resting in the soft October sunshine, had the air of tranquillity that befits nature when the harvests are ingathered and the summer's work is done. Mrs. Woolner came to her door, shading her eyes with her hand as she looked down the long, level road. She was watching for the return of her daughter Edith, who had spent the day in town. Presently Edith appeared at the corner of the road, but to her mother's surprise she was not alone. She was leading a little child. Mrs. Woolner thought at first that Edith had brought Cousin Sarah's Jenny or Cousin Marion's Tom to enjoy a week in the country, but as the two advanced nearer and reached the gate she discovered that this little stranger was not of her kindred. The child was thin, pale and poorly clothed. Her age was anywhere from seven to ten. She looked hungry, or rather starved, as if she had not had enough to eat, and she clung to Edith's hand as if she dreaded the inspection of the lady in the doorway.

"Who in the world is this, Edith?" cried the mother, in an accent half reproachful and half indignant. She felt like adding what was in her mind, "Where did you pick up this little scarecrow?" but she refrained from saying anything so uncivil. Mrs. Woolner was unlike Edith in one particular, although they had many things in common. She had never accepted Edith's views about the poor. If she could assist a poor family by a timely gift of money or of clothing she was willing to deny herself that she might render aid, but when it was a matter of seating a pauper

at her table or letting a waif sleep in one of her clean white beds she was aware of an inward protest. "Edith," Mrs. Woolner often said, "was too soft-hearted and sentimental for a world like ours, where there must be caste lines and definite places for different people."

"Mother," said Edith, as she lifted her face and kissed her mother's lips in reply to the question Mrs. Woolner had asked, "this is a little friend of mine. Her name is Jessie. She hasn't any home, and nobody can find her father, who has gone away across the great sea. Jessie's father is coming back some day, and when he comes I want him to find a little daughter whom he will be glad to see; a rosy, dimpled little Jessie. Come in, darling. You are going to stay here with me, and be quite safe."

Edith's vocation most of the year was that of a free kindergartner. With her the work was a continual joy. The poorer, the more forlorn, the more desolate her charges were, the stronger was the appeal they made to her overflowing kindness of heart. While at college Edith had studied sociology and had determined to make her life tell in practical helpfulness to the Lord's poor. She visited among the families of her children, and was acquainted with all their affairs. Her mother had some time ago decided that Edith must be allowed to carry out her own ideas without too much interference on her part. The daughter not only earned her own money, but was in possession of a small income, which had come to her as a legacy from the great-aunt whose name she bore. Edith would have been happier had her mother sympathized with her more deeply, but she tried her best never to let her actions disturb her mother's convenience or comfort. Never before had she ventured to introduce any one into the house without securing her mother's consent. Still she knew she could confidently rest on her mother's love.

Edith Woolner conducted little Jessie to her own room. It was a great room on the second floor of the house, that

had four windows, two of which looked out upon a garden still bright with asters and chrysanthemums. The child ran to one of the windows and clasped her hands in ecstasy. "Oh, so many, many flowers!" she said. "I have never seen so many!"

"Tomorrow," Edith answered, "you shall go to walk with me, and you shall gather all the flowers you can carry, armfuls of them if you choose. Now, dear, you are tired, and I must give you a bath and then you shall have supper and go to bed. You shall sleep here in my room, on this lounge, and I think you will have happy dreams."

"The lady," said Jessie, "is sorry that I have come." Her dark eyes filled with tears. She was one of those children whose eyes seem to occupy so much of the countenance that other features pass unnoticed. Nobody would have thought Jessie pretty as she stood beside Edith that evening, yet an artist would have seen that there were possibilities of uncommon beauty in the pallid little face.

"The lady is going to love you, dear," said Edith, as she went on with her arrangements for the comfort of her little guest.

When mother and daughter were alone Edith explained that this child had been brought to her kindergarten in the closing weeks of the summer by a neighbor, who had taken the child in out of pity. Jessie was an American, and this in itself was a distinction where nearly all the children in the school were Italians or Hungarians. The neighbor said that Jessie's mother had died of fever and that her father, a musician, who had been devoted to his wife and little girl and had formerly earned enough to keep them from want, had mysteriously disappeared. He had gone out and had not returned. After his wife's death, the neighbor had explained, Mr. Vernon was not right in his head. There was a report or rumor that he had joined a traveling company and had gone far away. At all events, the neighbor had taken Jessie in, the poor being kind to one another to a degree beyond the kindness of the rich.

Edith said that the child had been much on her mind. She knew that the O'Harras had several children of their own, and that the summer was an especially difficult time for them, much more difficult than the winter, for in the latter season the people for whom Mrs. O'Harra worked were at home, while in the former they were in Maine or the Adirondacks or abroad. She had felt that they ought to be relieved of the additional burden made by one more mouth to fill, and she had gone to see them in the hope that she might offer them help. "Then, mother dear," she added, "I saw that there was nothing to be done but to bring little Jessie here and take care of her until that poor wandering father gets back to New York."

"Edith," said Mrs. Woolner, "I can't imagine why you have the slightest anticipation of that father's ever coming back. Why did you tell Jessie that he had gone across the sea?"

"I heard something today that made me think that John Vernon had shipped before the mast. He could play the violin, the neighbors all said, and he was a man of some education, as I discovered by looking at the books he had left behind him, books which Mrs. O'Harra has preserved. In his boyhood, I learned, he had been a sailor, and there is a sort of floating tradition in the tenement that he belongs to a good family and that his people have cast him off. Jessie is a little thoroughbred. You will notice that when you are better acquainted with her. Whether or not her father finds her again, I mean to do all I can to care for her and bring her up in the right way. There is room enough in this big house for this one little lost lamb."

Mrs. Woolner smiled and sighed. "Your father would approve of you, Edith, if he were living. He used to do exactly such quixotic things. Don't bring any more little strangers into the house, and I'll try to think the best I can of this one."

Months and years slipped away. Jessie Vernon had

grown to be a tall and very beautiful girl in her eighteenth summer. Edith had in a sense adopted her, and to Mrs. Woolner and the circle of kindred and friends she had become a source of pleasure and was regarded as one of the family. The Woolners decided this year to close their house and spend a year in Italy. Of course Jessie accompanied them. On shipboard she attracted the attention of an elderly couple who were crossing, and who told Mrs. Woolner that for years they had spent very little time in America. "Your younger daughter," said the old gentlewoman, whose eyes constantly sought Jessie, "is the image of a daughter whom we lost a long time ago. She made an unfortunate marriage, and we were mistaken in our treatment of her and of her husband. I can hardly tell you how deep was our heartbreak when at last we traced her, only to find a grave in an obscure corner of a cemetery near New York. Twelve months ago, after a long search, we found her husband. He was ill and we ministered to him, fearing for a long time that he would die. Perhaps he might better have died, for he has gone through much hardship and his memory is sorely impaired. The one thing he still can do is to play on the violin that he loves, and that my husband and I used to loathe. John Vernon is at our home in Connecticut now. Our children at home are caring for him and we are trying to find, if we can, the little daughter whom he left behind when in desperation he took a ship and went he knew not where. I think if we could find her again it would prove his restoration, and it would make us utterly happy and blessed in the evening of our lives."

When Mrs. Woolner and Edith were by themselves this conversation was repeated in detail, the mother reluctant by this time to believe that she must give up the adopted child, who had crept into her heart. She said to Edith that the resemblance might be a coincidence; that the story was, after all, commonplace in the occurrences of a great

city, and that even the name, John Vernon, might mean nothing so far as their Jessie was concerned. Edith shook her head. The O'Harras had given her the few articles that had belonged to Jessie's mother—only a garment or two, and an old-fashioned brooch and a wedding ring—and she had the books inscribed with John Vernon's name. Nothing could be easier than to establish Jessie's identity with the grandchild the old people had been seeking.

In due time this came to pass, and with the recovery of his daughter the dimmed memory was restored to the musician.

None of the party spent the year in Italy as they had intended, for so soon as Jessie knew that she had a father living she was eager to see him once more. She remembered him perfectly, and he beheld in her, not the forlorn little one in the attic room where her mother had died, but the image of the fair young girl he had courted.

The Scriptures say, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." The proverb was verified in Edith Woolner's case. After the years she had spent in teaching little children, and when later her mother was taken from her, life became for her shadowy and sad. She did not wish to stay alone in her large house, nor did she feel strong enough to turn it into what she wished it might be, a rest home for convalescents and an asylum for destitute and friendless children. She was enthusiastic as ever in her desire to serve Christ and to scatter blessings in the path of those who are ready to perish, but her eyes had been overtaxed and she could not by herself search out the cases of those she longed to help. After the settlement of the estate, it was discovered that her provision for the future was smaller than her mother had supposed it would be. Then it was that Jessie Vernon and her kindred came to Edith's side, supplementing where they could and in every way possible assisting her to carry on Christ's work. Thus her bread upon the waters was borne back to her in rich measure.

BY WAY OF CONTRIVANCE

"WHAT did you say, Burchard? Frank Conrad in love? With whom, pray?"

"With little Molly Bigelow, bless her heart, the youngest but one of the Bigelow girls. They are all pretty; but there are seven of them, and folks don't seem to realize how nice they are."

"But what ails Frank, if he's in love, not to court Molly? He seems sort o' down-hearted."

"Indeed he well may be, Aunt Charity. Courting a Bigelow girl is like storming a fort. He can't get within speaking distance. Jack Elmore tried it, aunty. He was in love with Marjorie Bigelow, and I'm reasonably sure that she favored him; but then when he went to see her he was routed, horse, foot and dragoons. He gave it up and retreated in good order, stopped calling week evenings and Sundays, and went about his business. If Marjorie felt it she was too proud to show it, poor lass."

Burchard Miller was a Scotchman and a bachelor, who took an interest in the affairs of his young friends. His Aunt Charity was old in years, but young in heart.

"Was he not kindly received?" she asked. "I've always thought the Bigelows most hospitable and most courteous. They almost keep open house for their friends."

"Indeed they do, Aunt Charity. That's the worst of it. Jack used to call, hoping to see Marjorie; and first Madame Bigelow would come in, and then Mrs. Bigelow, in the most beautiful gown, all lace trimmed, and diamonds sparkling at her throat, like a queen, and it's the rule that you take notice of nobody else when Mrs. Bigelow's in the room. The girls drift in one by one, the whole seven; all

polite, all subdued, all meek, exactly like seven daisies in a field. Marjorie, who was the sweetest daisy of the lot, Jack thought, would smile at him, but he never got a chance to visit her, and so he gave it up. He married Ethel James, an only daughter. Marjorie was one of the bridesmaids."

"Ah, yes, I remember."

Mrs. Miller meditated. She was a rich widow with a big house and wide grounds. A brook was hers that forever babbled its secrets to the world, and an enchanting land-locked lake in miniature, where sweethearts might canoe, if they pleased.

"Burchard, what do you want me to do? Speak, dear boy."

"This, aunty. Invite a house party for a week, and include Molly Bigelow and Frank Conrad among the guests. Don't ask another Bigelow girl, even if their mother suggests it, as she probably will, and don't accept a substitute. Make it clear that Miss Molly is the one you are sending for."

Aunt Charity nodded. "I think I can manage it. I'll drive round and give my invitation in person this afternoon. You make your list, Burchard, of the men, and I'll show you mine of the girls. I'd like the house to be brightened by a little young life."

Mrs. Miller had very little difficulty in assembling her house party, though she was obliged to exercise diplomacy to secure Molly. Molly's mother, one of those softly invincible women, who conceal iron strength under velvet smoothness, tried in vain to have Julie or Katherine asked, instead of Molly.

"Julie plays so finely, and Katherine is so pretty, but Molly is such a baby, hardly out of the schoolroom. I really think you'd better let me choose for you among my girls. My rosebud garden of girls," she added with a laugh, sweet and silvery. Mrs. Miller understood how dominant was this mother's personality, and, in a flash, saw that her daugh-

ters were overshadowed when she was in the company. Indeed, Mrs. Bigelow arrogated to herself the right of monopoly if a man, young or old, was within reach. As a girl she had been a beauty and a belle. As a matron she was still attractive, and in the splendor of her charms she gave her daughters no opportunity to be themselves. They were simply her shadowy satellites.

Molly, in a flutter of joyous excitement, with a trunkful of dainty frocks, arrived by the same train that brought Frank Conrad. The first night he took her in to dinner. Their conversation at dinner was so entertaining and absorbing that they had to finish it in the conservatory. There was music in the drawing-room, and on the veranda several young people were walking up and down. As Burchard always maintained, his aunt's house was Liberty Hall; one could do what he liked there, and the good times were unchecked by any burdensome restrictions.

"Wouldn't you like to walk to the edge of the lake and see the moon shining on the water?" asked Frank. "It's a magnificent evening."

"I should love it, but mother said that I was to stay with the others, and particularly near Mrs. Miller, and I know she wouldn't like me to talk so long with you."

Molly blushed.

"Oh, if I bore you!"

"But you don't. Only I've never talked so long with any one person in my whole life, as with you tonight."

"See here, Molly Bigelow, we are under Mrs. Miller's roof, and she is responsible for us. To please you," he continued, looking gravely into Molly's flushed face, "I'll ask her if I may walk with you to the lake's edge, through the garden, in this moonlight. May I?"

"Has anybody else asked permission to do anything else that's nice tonight?"

"Why, not that I know of. But you have a very sensitive conscience, and I'd prefer to set it at rest. Come along, we'll both go to her."

Aunt Charity in her black silk gown, with her white shawl thrown over her ample shoulders, beamed benevolently upon the two when they stood before her. She smiled on Molly so lovingly, that Molly felt for almost the first time in her life, that a mother might be something besides a commander-in-chief.

"You run along, my dears," she said. "Frank, I put Molly in your charge. Molly, you may trust Frank Conrad to the last drop of his blood. He's true and tried, and I've brought him up. Now, hurry on, before the moon gets under a cloud. Frank, you bring the little girl back soon, do you hear?"

A picnic was on foot for the next morning, and though they went in a group, with Aunt Charity for a chaperone, arrived at the picnic ground the young people separated and went about in pairs. Again Molly discovered that Frank Conrad was her partner, and, seated under a leafy chestnut, they found themselves growing confidential, and Frank began telling Molly some of his hopes and plans.

"I'm going to South America! Did you know it?" he said. "We railway engineers have to be rolling stones more or less."

She looked startled.

"When do you go?" she ventured.

"Six weeks from today," he replied, taking out a memorandum book. "I hope," he said in a low voice, "to be married before I go."

She drew away perceptibly. "Married! I had not heard that you were engaged. Who is the lady?"

"I am not at liberty as yet to mention her name, but she is the loveliest, most fascinating, most bewitching girl in the world. She is without a peer."

"Indeed!" said Molly, frigidly. "If you are to be married so soon, Mr. Conrad, I wonder at your wasting time here. You should be at your fiancée's side."

She rose to her feet.

Frank Conrad rose, too.

"Molly Bigelow," he said, "are you utterly blind? Don't you know what I mean? My dear, my dear, you are the only fiancée I can ever desire. I know I'm frightening you, but you are the girl I mean to marry in less than a month from now. You, you, only you. Why, child, I've been courting you for six eternal months, with your mother looking on. Didn't you know it, dear?"

He looked into her eyes. The sound of voices was not far away. They could hear the murmur of talk mingled with the murmur of the wind in the pines. They could even hear the clatter of dishes, where, a little way off, the tables were being set for luncheon. Yet they were solitary, standing on the pine needles in a little copse that had been meant for lovers, and was the very fittest spot on earth for a betrothal.

Frank looked into Molly's eyes, a look tender, compelling, attracting. He spoke softly:

"Molly, will you be my wife?"

"Oh, Frank," she answered, and her eyes fell. He stooped and kissed her on the forehead. The kiss was as light as a bit of thistle-down, but her swift blush responded to it like kindling flame.

"I am the happiest fellow on this side of the Atlantic!" he exclaimed. "Molly, Molly, you are willing, aren't you?"

"Yes, Frank," she whispered; "but wait till you see mamma, before you say you are happy. She'll be furious. Mother thinks I am only a little girl. I don't know how we'll ever tell her. She'll say you must marry Julie or Barbara, and she'll send me away to school."

"You darling little goose! It's not Barbara nor Julie that I'm in love with, but you, and they are not in love with me! You are, aren't you, Molly?" he demanded, jealously, his arm around her.

"Yes, Frank, I am."

"Then, Molly, kiss me," and his lips touched hers.

There was a scene at the Bigelows' breakfast table the next morning. Letters were always waiting by the plates when the family came downstairs.

Mr. Bigelow opened his mail in a leisurely fashion, expecting nothing more exciting than a bill, or a letter from some relative, business correspondence of importance confining itself to the office. But this morning was exceptional. He read a letter, frowned, read it over, then exclaimed with emphasis, "Upon my word, mother! There is to be a wedding in this family, it seems!"

"Whatever can you mean, John?"

"What I say. Frank Conrad, in a most manly letter, asks my consent to his marrying Molly. He has already secured her promise, it appears!"

"I am much displeased with Molly," said Molly's mother. "I told Charity Miller that she was far too young and immature to be trusted from under my wing. That a daughter of mine should flirt, should misbehave in such a shocking way, makes me extremely mortified. John, what in the name of all that's sensible do you see to laugh at in this extraordinary situation?"

Mr. Bigelow restrained his mirth.

"Our daughter Molly is nineteen, Matilda, and you were not quite eighteen when you married me. Frank Conrad is twenty-six, is a rising engineer, belongs to a good family, and is, in short, a very desirable son-in-law. What puzzles me is when it occurred to him to court my Molly?"

For once Mrs. Bigelow was crushed. One and all, her family were against her.

"Why, mother!" said Marjorie, "Frank Conrad has been worshiping Molly this long time, but he never has had the least opportunity to let her know it, because he's always had to talk to you. As a household we are overpowering. There are so many of us, and we are always, all of us, in evidence when a man calls. I, for one," and Marjorie sighed, "feel very much like sending Molly congratulations

by telegraph. What a blessing for her that Mrs. Miller had this perfectly providential house party just now."

"Why, Marjorie!" exclaimed Mrs. Bigelow. Not yet had it dawned upon her that her girls were in rebellion; that they thought her anything but their best friend. No glimmering that Marjorie had borne a heart-ache was hers. Had she known it, she would have been very sorry.

"Jack Elmore was in love with Marjorie, mother, before he ever looked at Ethel James." This was from Barbara. Marjorie had left the room.

And now Madame Bigelow spoke. She was a ponderous woman, sixty-five or thereabouts, still accustomed to supremacy in her world, as her daughter-in-law was in hers. She addressed the latter:

"The question at issue is, 'What shall John say to Frank Conrad,' is it not?"

"As to that," replied her son, "I shall wire my consent. The young people will be at home this evening. The wedding is to take place almost immediately, and you, my dear," addressing his wife, "will have your hands full, seeing about the trousseau. Frank expects to be ordered to South America very soon, and intends to take his wife with him. When Molly is married, I shall invite you, Matilda, to take a trip abroad with me, and if there are any more strenuous courtships on the horizon, we'll leave them a clear field."

Mrs. Bigelow had nothing to say.

MISS ROSE

THE wide street was bordered by rows of beautiful old elms. Quite back from the roadway stood the large and comfortable homes of the village, some of them stately with colonial architecture and many rooms, others smaller, and shining with fresh paint. An air of prosperity pervaded Glenham Heights, and the inhabitants were grateful that up where they lived there was no stir of trade. Down below, by the river and in the valley, the factories clustered, and the cheery hum of machinery went on hour by hour. The operatives lived near the mills in little cottages, one exactly like another; each with its bit of garden, its tiny lawn, and its neat veranda; and they, too, had their look of comfort, which corresponded pleasantly and harmoniously to, and with, the atmosphere of affluence above them.

Miss Rose Latham dwelt by herself in the biggest mansion the Heights could show. It was a picturesque place, with spacious grounds, and acres of flowers and fruit. To keep the place and the home in order, a large force of employees were needful, and among them none was more loyal to Miss Rose than her head gardener, Aaron Webb.

He approached her one summer morning as she sat listlessly on the veranda, and stood there, hat in hand.

"What is the matter, Aaron?" Something in the man's manner struck her as unusual.

"Miss Rose," he said, with a deprecating gentleness, "the sweet peas are blooming like mad, the poppies are splendid, the nasturtiums are fairly running to seed, and the geraniums are getting beyond me. And down there," pointing to the valley, "there is a lot of children that are

crazy for flowers, and Mrs. Brown's baby died this morning, and Johnny Jenkins has run off to sea."

Miss Rose Latham smiled. She knew old Aaron's way of making suggestions. "You want me to send some of my flowers to the children and the people who are in trouble. Take all you can carry, Aaron, and don't bother me. You know you needn't ask, old friend."

"Miss Rose, dear lady, I don't want you should send the flowers. I was in hopes you'd go with them yourself. Nelly Archer, she's back, too, I'm told."

"Nelly! Is she, poor child? Well, well. Aaron, you gather the flowers and fill the pony cart, and I'll do as you advise. I'm a bit lonesome today. Maybe it will cheer me up to go and see people. Mother always went."

Yes, mother always went. But for two years mother's busy hands had been folded, and her eyes had been closed. She was not, for God had taken her. And her daughter had not ceased to miss and mourn for the precious one. She did not fully realize that her mother was living in heaven, and loving her more than ever, her heart having tethered itself to the grave in the cemetery. Aaron had not forgotten that Miss Rose was now occupied in recalling every incident of the final illness, and he had set himself to arouse her, and had hit upon the good expedient of getting her to take up some of her mother's ministries.

The pony-cart came to the gate, and it was overflowing with color and perfume. Aaron had cut his flowers with a lavish hand. On the seat, beside Miss Rose, he laid a delicate bunch of late roses, faintly tinted pink petals, and glowing dark ones, and in the center a single superb specimen, waxen white, and fit for a bride.

"I'll give this rose to Nelly," thought the lady as she took it for a moment in her hand and laid it against her cheek.

At Nelly's door she stopped first. And as Nelly heard her step in the little passage, she called cheerily in a sweet,

"Come in, dear Miss Rose. You'll find me in the parlor."

Rose entered, a great pity in her face. For Nelly had returned from a fruitless errand, as the whole village knew—heights and lowlands equally interested. She had been the best scholar in the academy, the brightest, keenest, cleverest girl for miles around, and she had been stricken with blindness. Her neighbors had joined together to send her to the city to consult the famous oculist whose skill had made sightless eyes see in many a case, and Nelly had gone away, radiant in mind, sure that she would have her vision restored. The disappointment had been terrible. An operation had failed to give back the lost sight. Rose's own eyes were tear-dimmed as she crossed the room.

But Nelly met her with a smile.

"Oh, what an exquisite rose!" she said. "And how good you are to come so soon, Miss Rose, I've been sitting and singing all day. God is so good. The world is so beautiful. There are so many things I can learn to do! And at night when I am asleep, I have dreams in which I see—see everything lovely in the lovely world."

"What are you meaning to learn, Nelly?" asked Rose, restraining her impulse to be compassionate.

"Type-writing, and raffia-work, and music, and cake-making. Why, I've made cookies this morning with mother's help. Just one thing God won't let me do; I won't bemoan my fate. He'll hold me back from that. Why, Miss Rose! I've soldier's blood in me. My ancestor fought at Bunker Hill, and father took part in the Civil War. A soldier's daughter must be brave!"

Into Miss Rose's mind flashed the lines of Reginald Heber's stormy hymn:

> Who best can drink his cup of woe
> Triumphant over pain,
> Who patient bears his cross below
> He follows in His train!

She left the roses in Nelly's lap, and went to Mrs. Brown's house. The baby was dead, Aaron had said.

All was silent in the tiny four-roomed cottage. The baby lay as if fast asleep, its tiny hands clasped. The mother sat by the little crib with such white misery in her face that Rose shrank back, appalled. An instant later, she gathered her courage in a resolute effort of her will, and took poor Mary Brown into her arms.

"They are coming to put my baby in the coffin," said the mother. "Nobody shall touch him!"

"You will lay him in the coffin yourself," said Miss Rose, going to the door. The undertaker was there, with the little white casket. He looked relieved when he saw Rose Latham.

"She is so desolate," said the kind man, "for her husband, you remember, died just before the baby was born."

Rose Latham stayed all the afternoon with Mary Brown. The baby was laid to rest, and covered with sweet peas and geranium leaves. Few words were exchanged between the two women, but Rose did not leave Mrs. Brown until the neighbor who was to watch with her that night had arrived, and hung up her hat in the entry closet.

"My lot is easy, my burdens are light," and compared with those of her friends, they were. Rose Latham's flowers made the village children very happy that day. As she drove onward in the golden twilight, she determined that with God's help, she would carry comfort day by day to those who needed it, just where she was. There were home ministries for her; there was work that she could do; there were flowers for her to scatter broadcast on the daily path. Old Aaron, pottering in the herb-garden, smiled to himself.

"Miss Rose is her mother's daughter," he said.

"Aaron, Aaron!" she just then exclaimed, "I'm ashamed of my carelessness. I never went near the Jenkinses. And Johnny's run off, you heard. I'm too tired, and it's too

late to go back; but won't you send your Peter to ask Johnny's mother to come here after supper?"

"I will that," answered Aaron.

Johnny Jenkins was the village ne'er-do-well. His father was over strict with the lad, and his mother foolishly indulgent. The boy was full of daring and mischief, and was always in trouble. Miss Rose was not sure that going to sea would harm him. A touch of stern discipline might in the end help him to manlier conduct, and captains were not always harsh, nor, indeed, were sailors devoid of humanity.

Mrs. Jenkins came, limp and broken, a weak woman who could make no firm stand against disaster. Miss Rose consoled her. She told her that God was on sea as well as on shore, and, kneeling down, she commended the whole family to the watching care of God.

. . . . . .

When Miss Rose laid her head on her pillow that night, she was so tired that she fell asleep as sweetly as if she had been a little child.

THE STUMBLING-STONE

"WE all have our stumbling-stones."

Mrs. Deacon Wentworth uttered this plaintive statement with a profound sigh. "All of us," she added, "except the Deacon. He's a saint. And maybe you, Susy Prentiss, haven't got any rocks of offense. Mine is my quick temper. I flare up like tinder. The Deacon says he doesn't mind, he'd rather have my hot temper than any other woman's cold one. He don't enjoy monotony." Mrs. Deacon Wentworth leaned back in the Boston rocker, and fanned herself. She had the air of a comfortable and matronly hen, who is satisfied with her barnyard and sure that the supply of corn is ready for her chicks. It was her habit to boast of her quick temper, yet she was really a placid person seldom ruffled. She would sometimes tell the deacon how angry she had been at somebody's shortcomings. Now terribly indignant, while as she spoke her voice was as soft as the purling of the brook before the door. The brook went purling along, singing its little song, and Mrs. Deacon went peacefully on her way, too. She liked to fancy herself rather formidable, and Susy Prentiss, who had been at school with her, smiled as she took a seat on the front doorstep.

"Never having had a husband, Maria, I've had less to put up with than most," she remarked, "yet I have a stumbling-stone. It is my love of a clean house. I'm trying with all my might to conquer my dislike to dirt and disorder. I'm ashamed of being so old-maidish."

"Why, Susan!" ejaculated Mrs. Deacon, holding up her hands. The good housewives down Dingle way were notable, and they despised dirt, and prided themselves on their

neatness. This regretting a virtue as if it were a vice, seemed a sign of falling from grace, and the deacon's wife wondered what had happened to her old friend. Had she had a sunstroke? Or, was there coming on softening of the brain? Old Grandfather Pollock had died of that slow malady, Mrs. Wentworth recollected.

"You see," Susy proceeded very soberly, "there's been nobody to make a litter nor disturb my home, and when I've cleaned a room, I've hated to upset it, so that sometimes I've actually slept on the attic floor, that I might not have to use my own front chamber. The minister's sermon the other day about making idols of our earthly treasures set me to thinking hard. My house, my old mahogany furniture that never had a scratch, my parlor with the long pier glass, my blue china tea-set, they are my stumbling-stones. I can't keep the house any way but the way I do, so I've come to a resolution."

"Well?" Mrs. Wentworth waited expectantly.

"I'm goin' over to the Industrial School to see if I can get a young girl or a child from there to come and live with me, who'll appreciate a good home."

"How old did you calculate to have the orphan?" inquired Mrs. Wentworth, politely.

"If I choose a very little one, I can train her up so as she'll do things my own fashion, and I can get her to love me and grow up like a daughter. If I get a girl fourteen or fifteen years old, she'll be more of a help, and I'm not so certain that I wouldn't prefer that."

"I can't say I approve your idea, Susy, but then I can't say as I disapprove," observed Mrs. Wentworth, judicially. "You will find either one you adopt, for I s'pose adoption's in your thoughts, that you're shouldering a big responsibility, and you'll not have your home the spotless place it is now. And John's folks, what will they say? They'll shake their heads."

John was Susy's brother, and his farm joined her little

garden. John was a good brother, but close-fisted, and he and his children might easily be annoyed, if Susy should form new ties.

"John and his people have nothing in the world to do with my taking in a poor orphan for the discipline and uplifting of my soul, any more than they would if I had married Abner Hulst when he asked me last year."

"First I ever heard of that!" exclaimed Mrs. Wentworth. "Abner wanted you? Surely the good Lord guided you when you refused him, the old curmudgeon. He treated his first wife most meanly. But he didn't grieve over your declining his proposal, did he, for he's married now, safe enough; married to Helen Jenner. She's equal to keeping Abner in order, but you wouldn't have been. At your time o' life, it's not likely you'll change your condition, is it?"

"I cannot be sure," replied Susy Prentiss, who was forty-three and very comely. "If an orphan doesn't help me over my stumbling-stone, I may marry somebody yet!"

Mrs. Deacon Wentworth gasped, then laughed until her shoulders shook. Then she went home to prepare supper for her good man.

Susy Prentiss brought home a golden-haired, blue-eyed scrap of a little girl from the Industrial School, and found herself very busy in making clothes for the child, teaching her the catechism, and generally fussing over her. The house ceased to look spick-and-span. A doll blinked seriously from the corner of the living-room sofa. Little Maud ran about like a flash of light, and only rebelled when Susy, clinging to her traditions, daily fitted a tiny thimble on her rosy finger, and insisted on teaching the baby to sew.

"I fink I tan't sit still," the child would say, pouting. But Susy was firm.

"I fink I'd be gooder if I had my fwend here, too," solemnly declared Maudie, when one day she had been shut for ten minutes in the closet, for stamping with her foot on the strip of cloth on which she was learning to hem, and

losing her thimble under the lilac bush. It took her half an hour to find the thimble; but Susy, gentle as a dove, was determined, nevertheless, and find the thimble in the grass Maudie did, before she was permitted to play again.

"Who is your fwend?" Susie was holding the little maid in her lap, and forgiving her for her naughtiness. A big tear quivered on the golden-brown lashes.

"My fwend is Fanny. She's so good, you'd love her."

"I love you, Maud, even when you are bad," said Susy, in whose heart an unsuspected fount of mother-love had suddenly gushed forth with sweet waters.

But she made an errand to the Industrial School before many days, and brought home another orphan girl, little dark-eyed Fanny. Her neighbors were aghast, and John's folks deeply resentful, but Susy kept right on.

She grew younger and prettier as the children, who called her "Auntie," stole farther and farther into her heart. And, as they worked in their little gardens, and after awhile strolled to school with luncheons packed in dinner-pails, she forgot her old desire to have a house like a shrine. The house was still sweet and clean, but it had now become a home, where children romped and played and love reigned supreme.

"A gentleman's at the door, Auntie," said Maudie one afternoon; "he asked for you." Susy stepped into the passage. At the door stood a stranger, tall, bronzed, smiling. He held out his hand.

"Do you know me, Susy?"

"Arthur Ellis! Arthur! Where did you come from, after all these years?"

"From Seattle, Susy. I've come for you; to take you back with me. You said 'No,' when we were girl and boy, and I was such a fool I accepted it. But you are not to say 'No' again. This time, it must be 'Yes.' Susy, will you marry me?"

This was poured out in a breathless torrent as they stood

by the door. The man's arms went around the woman. He stooped and kissed her lips. She did not withhold them. Tears rushed to her eyes as he still held her closely.

"Oh, Arthur, I did love you," she stammered, "but you would whittle chips in the best room, and I couldn't stand it. And you played tricks on me, and tied my braids to the back of a chair."

"I'm ashamed of myself, Susy, for I'm an untidy chap yet. But I've reformed. I'll do nothing you don't like. Marry me next week, dear, and come away into the big world. Come to Seattle, Susy. You'll feel alive there."

She had drawn him into the sitting-room. The two children were scampering about under the apple-trees. He looked into Susy's eyes with a glance of perfect satisfaction."

"You are prettier than you were twenty years ago, Susy," he said. "Let me kiss you, darling. I've starved for you so long."

Again he embraced her, till blushing, she drew herself away. What had become of the years? They were gone, and these two were young again.

"What shall I do with the children?" she said musingly, after awhile.

The man looked puzzled.

"What children?"

"My two little daughters; adopted, you know."

"You took them because you were so lonely, dear?"

"I took them because I found a house with nothing in it but chairs and tables could not feed an immortal soul. Arthur, are you a Christian man? You know the old trouble between us, because you neglected the church, and were rude to the minister." She spoke wistfully.

"I am not the man I would like to be," said Arthur Ellis; "but in the years I have been working alone, in mines, in forests, I have learned to know the Lord, and I am his servant. I'm glad you have the little adopted girls,

dear, for I have two little lads, children of my partner, who died, and I'm their guardian. We'll have a house full of bairns, and plenty to do, and, thank God! plenty to do it with."

So Susy's stumbling-stone proved a bridge, over which she stepped to happiness and joy. She married her old sweetheart, and went West with him; but she did not at once take the little girls. They were left for a year in the little home, a maiden cousin taking charge of it and them. Later, the little girls went West, where the adopted brothers awaited them.

"Strange," said Mrs. Deacon Wentworth to her good husband, "are the ways of Providence. Strange and mysterious, indeed. Who'd ever have fancied that Susy Prentiss and Arthur Ellis would have found each other after so many years."

The two were sitting at the breakfast-table as they chatted.

"They missed a good deal of sunshine by not marrying when we did; but it's better to find happiness late than not at all."

"Yes, dear, better late than never," agreed Mrs. Wentworth, handing a cup of coffee across the table.

ST. VALENTINE'S EVE

RUTH LINDSAY was a painter of miniatures. In her girlhood she had studied under good teachers at home, and had been given the advantage of several years abroad, where she had taken lessons from great masters. For a while, after her return to America, success had attended her efforts. There was a passing wave of interest in miniatures, and hers for a short period commanded good prices from a certain fashionable set. These things ebb and flow like the tide. Ruth had reached forty, which is not an advanced age, but which marks a transition period from youth, with shadows of middle life creeping softly toward it, not threateningly, but lovingly, when one happens to have health and strength and a full purse. But Ruth Lindsay was fragile. She had many days when she was laid aside by the headaches that were a legacy from those who had gone before her, and, furthermore, her pocket-book was generally thin, and the demands upon it increased with her birthdays. At present it seemed as though very few people wanted to pay for miniatures, photography having reached a point of excellence and artistic beauty so eminent that the camera supplanted the brush.

Ruth and her father were alone in the world. Her father was a splendid looking old gentleman, of a constitution so robust that he never felt an ache or a pain, and of a temperament so sensitive that it could not endure rough contacts in business, or permit its owner to engage in anything practical. Mr. Lindsay supposed himself to be an author, and to pursue lines of scholarly investigation. He spent, like Mr. Casaubon in *Middlemarch,* hours among his books, and every Monday and every Wednesday, carefully dressed, and carrying a gold-headed cane, he emerged from the modest apartment which Ruth and he called home, that he might consult volumes of reference in a great

library. On those days it was his custom to lunch elegantly in a well-known restaurant, and he never dreamed that his daughter Ruth, who supported him, usually fasted on those days, doing her little best to make up for his extravagance. Whatever else occurred, Mr. Lindsay was well dressed when he went out. He was wont to say that it did not do for a man to look shabby as he grew old. "Nobody notices you, my dear," he would remark to Ruth, "so long as you have the air of a gentlewoman."

Fortunately for herself, Ruth Lindsay had a buoyant spirit and was not easily depressed. She abhorred debt, and worked hard to keep the wolf from the door. Latterly, she had painted menu cards, and had illustrated with dainty pictures in the margin some holiday books, that were selected by a wealthy friend as gifts for a favorite granddaughter. She was brave and cheery, and her blue eyes looked defiance at poverty. One day, however, she was aware of a blur before her eyes, and she was frightened when the air around grew darkened by strange, black, feathery shapes that floated uneasily in the field of vision. The oculist she consulted prescribed glasses and rest. On the latter he insisted, and rest was for Ruth the one impossibility. What should she do?

On the eve of St. Valentine's Day, two gay little neighbors came flying up to her studio, their eyes shining, their dimples dancing, their cheeks rose-red with excitement. They were hurrying to the postoffice to send their valentines, and they expected heaps of treasures in return when the morrow should come. "Oh, Miss Ruth," they said, "isn't Valentine's Day the greatest fun? Isn't it perfectly gorgeous? Don't you love it?"

"Well," answered Ruth to the last question, "I did love it when I was sixteen, and I agree with you that life is full of fun and delight in the teens. It is ages, though, since anybody sent me a valentine, or I sent one to anybody. I remember," she went on, musingly, "that Duncan Stewart

sent me a beautiful valentine the year I was twenty. It is strange that I have never heard from him since then. He went to India and engaged in trade, and, I suppose, he long ago forgot little Ruth Lindsay, who worked by his side in Paris."

"Was he an artist?" asked the girls, both speaking together. Mary and Jenny Keese were both very sentimental. Being twins, they were a good deal like roses growing on the same stem. They often thought the same thoughts, and dreamed the same dreams.

"Yes, my dears, he began life by wanting to be an artist, but he gave up in despair. He found that he could be a good copyist, and he was not satisfied with that, so when a fine chance came to go into a line where he could make money, he adopted it, and dropped his painting. We were great friends for a while, but life separates young people sometimes."

"We know," said Mary Keese, and Jenny echoed her; "we have read Jean Ingelow's poem, 'Divided,' that explains it. No wonder you are beautiful, Miss Ruth. You have had a romance. We are sure of it, and one day," exclaimed Jenny, eagerly, "your lover will come back, riding on a white horse, and he will ring your door-bell and bring you another valentine. Good-by, dear Miss Ruth, or we shall miss the post."

"Good-by, you sweet children," said Miss Ruth, "until tomorrow." And she added, "Should I meet Duncan Stewart on the street I would not know him, and, besides, dear father will be home soon, and I must make haste and prepare his supper."

"Mother says," confided Mary to Jenny, as they walked toward the postoffice, "that Mr. Lindsay is a very selfish old man, and that he is killing Miss Ruth by inches. Isn't it a shame?"

"Yes, but then there is something rather grand about him, and he looks like one of the old nobles of France, or

like an exiled prince, and, of course, children have to honor their parents. I don't see what else Miss Ruth can do except take care of her father. When his wonderful book is written and published, it will probably make a fortune for them both. That is what Miss Ruth expects."

"I doubt her expecting it," said the sister. "It is what her father dreams."

When Mr. Lindsay returned that evening, Ruth was shocked to see that some blight had fallen on his usual happy optimism. He seemed almost, for the first time, weary and old and discouraged. The truth was that an outspoken critic had that day pricked his balloon, by telling him a few plain facts. His vanity had suffered and he was sorely disturbed. A good deal out of temper, he scarcely tasted Ruth's dainty supper, and about eight o'clock went to his room, saying that he was tired and needed sleep.

Ruth settled herself beside the lamp and opened a book, but almost immediately closed its pages and turned down the light. Not for her were there to be any longer charmed evenings with the books that were as manna to her soul. She folded her hands and looked down at them, half despondingly. Those faithful, toiling hands! Were they to be crippled and hindered in their bread-winning because the eyes were giving out? Who would take care of her father if she became unable to earn money? As she sat thinking, silently, there came into her mind, from somewhere out of space, a sweet, uplifting thought of God's goodness. "Take no thought for the morrow: the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

In heavenly love abiding,
  No change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding,
  For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
  My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
  And can I be dismayed?

A low knock at the door aroused her from meditation, and she became aware that the knock had followed the buzz of the electric bell. She crossed the room into the little hall and opened the door. A gentleman stood there, hat in hand. "Ruth Lindsay," he said, "do you know me? May I come in? May I say 'Hello, Ruth,' as I used to?"

"Why," she faltered, hardly believing the evidence of her senses, "it is never Duncan Stewart! Come in? Of course. Are you back from the ends of the earth?"

They sat together late that evening, talking in low tones, and telling one another the story of twenty years. "I should have found you long ago," said the man, "if I had been free, but I did not strike luck at once, and I have been a wanderer, seeking my fortune in many lands. As long as my mother and sisters were poor, I could form no ties; but I have reached a place where I have been able to provide them against want, and now, on Valentine's Eve, I have been thrice fortunate to discover you. It happened in the queerest way, through two pretty little girls, whom I encountered in the postoffice. I had discovered your address through the Endicotts, who showed me the beautiful books you had illustrated lately, but I did not know the quickest way to get here, and I was asking it, when those young girls stepped up, begged my pardon, and told me just how to go. Then, dear, my courage failed, and I wavered for two hours before I dared enter this domicile. Ruth, we were lovers once, were we not?"

"We were good friends, Duncan," replied Ruth, "hardly lovers;" and the man perceived that if he were to gain his valentine, it would be by siege and not by assault. She must be courted.

"We may be friends still?" he inquired.

"Yes," she answered; and she let her hand remain an instant in the grasp of the strong, firm man's hand that held it close, and then raised it to his lips.

When he arose to go, Ruth said, as with an after-

thought: "Father will be sorry that he did not see you. He was weary, and retired early."

"Thank God!" Duncan murmured under his breath; but Ruth only heard him say courteously: "I shall hope to be presented to your father tomorrow. I am coming tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. You cannot keep me away, sweetheart, for I have returned to be your valentine."

It was late that night before Ruth Lindsay slept. "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow," she kept saying over and over, in a happy dream. She had not realized that all the years there had been hidden away in her heart a memory of the gallant youth who had been her comrade a score of years before. The gallant youth had disappeared. In his stead was a man of presence, a little stout, with crisp curls turning gray, a square jaw, a firm chin, and eyes that looked the world in the face with fearless honesty. She liked this Duncan Stewart, and she knew he would win her. Indeed, she knew herself already half won. He, too, must have seen a change. Had she read his mind aright, she would have known that he thought the woman had more than fulfilled the beautiful promise of her girlhood.

Later on there was a wedding; and Mr. Lindsay, more a Chesterfield than ever, gave the bride away. Mary and Jenny were in the seventh heaven of delight, because they were bridesmaids to their dear Miss Ruth. When the days came that Mrs. Duncan Stewart lived in a grand house, with her father established on one floor of it, to his heart's content, pottering over his manuscript with the same perfervid anticipation, never finishing anything, but always proud and happy, when Duncan and his wife went to and fro at their will, and she saw again something of the great world, she was often able to send many lovely gifts to the romantic twins, who had, they were sure, guided her lover back to her on St. Valentine's Eve.

AN AMATEUR IN CHARITY

IT was New Year's Eve and bitterly cold. The Old Year was going out on the wings of a wild northwester. By morning the gale would probably have spent itself and left comparative peace in a world white with snow. There might be stars in the sky to welcome the dawn of the New Year, latest child of Time. As the Old Year departed not a star was to be seen. The street and roads were already encumbered with drifts, and thick flakes whirled through the air. It was a night to stay indoors, if one could, and to wrap to the eyes in one's warmest clothing, if forced to encounter the weather.

In the Meredith home everything was bright and cheery. The lamp on the center table in the living-room burned with a steady light. A fire leaped and sparkled on the hearth more for cheer than for other efficiency, the house being thoroughly heated by steam. There were easy chairs, books on the shelves, a litter of magazines and newspapers and pictures on the walls. Everything betokened comfort and luxury. Annie Meredith, sitting beside the lamp absorbed in an interesting story, but on the alert for a caller whom she expected, gave the last touch of roseate beauty to a scene-setting of surpassing charm. Her caller came presently, divested himself of ulster, cap and overshoes in the hall, and presented himself, a tall, athletic figure, none the worse for a tussle with the storm, ready to watch the Old Year out and the New Year in with Annie. He was Dr. Sterling, to whom she was engaged, and he had in his pocket the solitaire which he had brought to put on her finger this evening. Her mother came flitting in, a plump little matron in her early fifties. The three were

chatting eagerly around the fire when the door again opened and a big policeman in full uniform stood before them. The trio looked around in the greatest surprise. The policeman did not speak, but a smile crept around his mouth, contradicting the grimness of his lips. At the same instant recognition flashed into the eyes of the ladies, and Dr. Sterling shouted in a great laugh of mingled amazement and amusement.

"What's up now, John?" inquired the doctor. "What's the meaning of this masquerade, and where did you borrow the clothes?"

"I'm an officer on duty tonight, if you please," replied John Meredith, a trifle embarrassed by his mother's arms, clasped around him as she stood on tip-toe. He kissed her and seated her tenderly in her own arm-chair. Then he explained. "A friend of mine, Patrick McMahon, has a wife at the crisis of pneumonia tonight. With the permission of his captain I have taken his place until tomorrow morning. His clothes fit me, as you see, and I am going to walk his beat, do his work, and, in fact, be a roundsman until seven o'clock tomorrow, when I shall be relieved."

"You do look a bit like McMahon," ejaculated the doctor, "but did any one ever hear of so mad a freak?"

"Mad or not, I'm in for it," said John Meredith. "There was nobody to take Patrick's place, and so I volunteered. What's the use of having been on the football team at Yale, to say nothing of having boxed for fun with brawny athletes, if a fellow at a pinch cannot help another fellow in extremity? Well, I'm off. Wish me luck, you three. I say, don't mention this to anybody now or ever. It would be likely to get some of the force into trouble." With this John Meredith vanished into the night and the snow. He had been an enthusiastic Settlement worker ever since he had been graduated from the university, and it was his delight to know and love people of all sorts and conditions. It was not too much to say of John Meredith that

he was the friend of every man in town. It was like him to have persuaded a captain of police to let him take Pat McMahon's place for a night. He was an amateur in charity. By which is meant one who loved as well as practiced the divine quality.

Tramping his beat, up and down from street to street, John Meredith at first found nothing exciting. Presently, however, he was aware of what a policeman in reality, instead of one in masquerade, would have selected at once as suspicious characters. Stealing along, keeping close to the houses, and now and then darting into an area and remaining as if in conference, he observed a ragged man and a shambling, loose-jointed boy. He kept his eye upon them, not feeling certain whether they might be thieves intent on house-breaking, or vagrants, who on this bleak night were frozen, hungry and homeless. He decided to have a chat with them, and coming upon them silently in the snow, he suddenly flashed upon them a tiny electric light which he had slipped into his pocket before leaving home. The man stood his ground without resentment, while the boy tried to run away. John did not think it necessary to speak in the gruff tones usual to midnight guardians of the peace. He simply said, "You two appear to have had no supper, if I can judge by the way the kid looks, and you don't seem quite to know where to go, so come along with me."

"Don't take us to the station house, Mr. Policeman," said the boy. "Dad and I haven't any home, we haven't any work or any money. We thought there might be an unlocked door and a garbage pail in some area. That's what we've been looking for. We want a crust and a bone. We're starved."

"Come along with me," said John. "I'll see that you have hot coffee and something to eat and a good bed to sleep in."

"You're a new kind of policeman," ejaculated the man.

"I'm a man and a brother, that's all," said John, piloting his charges straight to the University Settlement, where

a lot of his classmates and chums were making a night of it. They were watching the Old Year out and the New Year in, just as Annie Meredith and Dr. Sterling were, just as Christian people were doing in many an open church. Not precisely as homeless and hungry people were, stealing along cold sidewalks and sleeping in cellars and under bridges and wherever the tempest overlooked a little corner in the dark.

None of the boys paid any special attention to John. He drew aside a man on whom he could depend, told him to look well to the comfort of these poor waifs, and giving him a peculiar handgrip which made the other stare for an instant, he said, "Try to detain them here till somewhere around ten o'clock tomorrow morning. I want the lad to have a happy New Year for once."

John returned to his beat, stamping his feet as he walked to keep them warm, getting a new idea of the hardships that are commonplaces to the police, finding the night, on the whole, less monotonous than he had expected and humming to himself from time to time a bar or two of the "Old Gray Bonnet." When he tired of this he varied it with "By the Light of the Silvery Moon," and other popular catches. He paused at the open door of a saloon and by his presence intimidated a group of men the worse for Barney Flynn's poisoned alcohol. There might have been a fight, if his stern "None of that. Go home peaceably, if you know what's good for you," had not, so to speak, nipped it in the bud. Barney put up his shutters, grumbling, and the men who had been drinking at his counter took their devious and stumbling way to homes where patient wives dreaded their coming. What heaps of misery must be laid at the door of the omnipresent saloon! What joy unspeakable would come to women and children, if its power could be shaken and its course of blasting disaster somehow arrested! So thought John Meredith, pondering on ways and means, as he continued to tramp on his beat.

The New Year with its ringing of bells, fanfare of whistles and general jubilation was fully inaugurated when the make-believe policeman, sturdily pacing to and fro along streets which he knew by daylight, had his attention caught by the sudden flare of a light on the second floor of a three-story brick house, followed directly by the lighting of the gas in the lower hall. The door opened and a woman with whom he was well acquainted, the wife of an intimate friend, stepped out and ran hurriedly down the steps. She had put on a long cloak and had a quilted hood upon her head. As she saw him, she stopped and called "Officer, won't you please come here?" in a voice of mingled supplication and relief. "Oh, Mr. McMahon, I'm so glad it's you," she said. "My husband is away, the maids had leave to stay out all night and the baby has been taken ill. We have no telephone. I never wanted one till now, and I must have the doctor. Would you mind calling him for me? Dr. Sterling—his office is just around the corner."

"Be aisy, Mrs. Hurlbut," answered the policeman. "I know Dr. Sterling and I'll have him around in a jiffy. Let me see you back in your own house. It's cold the night is, to be sure."

Mrs. Hurlbut disappeared within her door, and John hastily rushed for Dr. Sterling. The physician had not been long at home, and was sitting in his library thinking over the bliss of the evening and remembering the look in Annie's eyes when he slipped the betrothal ring on her finger. He opened the door at the sound of the night bell, and there was no delay in his swift answer of Mrs. Hurlbut's summons. John had no time to parley with him, nor did they exchange a word of banter after the first salutation.

Meanwhile, the tide had turned for the better in the home of Policeman McMahon. His wife passed the crisis,

and when morning came her husband thanked God that Mary was to stay with him and the children. As he wrung John Meredith's hand and tried to thank him the tears dimmed his eyes and his tongue faltered. "Never mind, old chap," said John. "I don't want thanks. I've started the New Year as I wanted to, doing a good turn for one of my friends."

After breakfast and a bath at home, Mr. Meredith, arrayed in his usual habiliments, called at the Settlement, looked up his protégés of the previous night, and by skilful questioning and a little personal trouble, managed to start father and son on a new year of hope and endeavor.

"One never knows what John will do next," observed his little mother, shaking her head as she thought of his last piece of eccentricity.

"Yes, mother," Annie replied, "but John's surprises are revelations of the kindest heart in the world. He's an amateur in charity. That's what our John is."

UNDER AN AUGUST MOON

EUPHEMIA CLAYTON came in from the postoffice with a letter in her hand. She had not opened it, although at every turn of the dusty highroad that led from the village to the farm, she had been sorely tempted to do so. The writing was crabbed and unfamiliar, but she had seen it once or twice in her life, and she knew it for that of Uncle Jabez Barclay. Whatever Uncle Jabez wanted was invariably done by the Clayton family, and Euphemia very much wondered what he wanted now. It might be pleasant or disagreeable; there was no foretelling. The peculiar feature in the case was that the letter should be addressed neither to father or mother, but to herself.

Mrs. Clayton, a spare, elderly woman, with an anxious, care-worn face, was preparing the vegetables for the twelve o'clock dinner. She looked up and smiled when Euphemia, with a sigh, sank into a chair.

"What is it now, daughter?" she asked.

"I don't know, mother. It's a letter from Uncle Jabez—a letter to me."

"Open it, dear."

Who has not known the hesitation with which we sometimes struggle before looking into the contents of an envelope? A letter is commonplace enough, but it is often the messenger of destiny. It may make or mar a life. It may bring good tidings or bad. Occasionally, we feel a thrill beforehand when the postman drops a letter at the door, for its very look indicates its nature. Bills, invitations, announcements, letters of friendship, letters of condolence, love letters, business letters, all have a peculiar look that belong to themselves.

"Uncle Jabez," said Euphemia, as she glanced over the closely written page, "must be a mind-reader. Just listen."

Mrs. Clayton took a chair. By this time the dinner was well started and she had leisure for a few moments' rest, and was as eager as her daughter to know what bit of good fortune had come to their house. Good fortune of late years had visited them seldom, but it's a long lane that has no turning. The slip of yellow paper that had fallen from the letter and lay on Euphemia's lap, was plainly a check. Mrs. Clayton leaned forward and took it into her rough hand; she smoothed it tenderly and longingly. It was drawn to the order of Euphemia Clayton, and the amount was one hundred dollars. The letter read:

DEAR NIECE:—Unless I am misinformed, you have arrived at your nineteenth year. I think you ought to have a better education than you can get in your present locality. Some time ago I entered your name on the waiting list at the Westfield Seminary for Young Women. I have received a letter from the principal saying that there is now a vacancy. The money I enclose will pay for the first half year. You will have a fortnight to get ready, and then I expect you to go and do your level best to be a credit to your family. Your father has been so shiftless that you need never expect anything much from him, and I have other young people besides yourself to look after. At the expiration of six months, if I hear a good report of you, I will send another check.

Your affectionate uncle, JABEZ BARCLAY.

"Horrid, hateful old man," said Mrs. Clayton. "Why did you call him a mind-reader? He never could do a kind thing in a kind way. That remark about your father is unpardonable. John is a better man than my Brother Jabez ever thought of being, though he is poor and Jabez has made money. If I were you, Euphemia, I would send the check straight back."

"I said he was a mind-reader, because I have wanted

so very much to go away and learn more than I have been able to here at home. You see, mother, dear, that if anything happens to father I am not prepared to teach or do a single thing to earn my living. I have worried more than you know about this, and while I feel just as you do about the undeserved slur on father, I think I ought to take this money and use it as my uncle desires."

"What about Silas?" said the mother, quietly.

A flush overspread Euphemia's face. She was a fair girl, tall and slender, with dark blue eyes and a profusion of light brown hair, arranged low on her neck. Although she had a great deal of hair, it did not seem to weight her head, for it was so light and fluffy that it did not suggest the idea of weight. Silas Heath had said more than once that Euphemia reminded him of an August lily. Her mother was not poetical, but she, too, sometimes thought of a lily when she glanced at her only child, the young daughter who was her father's pride, as well as her mother's chief joy in a difficult life. Whatever had been given to these parents they thought nothing of as compared with Euphemia. Whatever they had lost Euphemia made up for. Her mother could not understand how it was that this child, so worshipped in her home, should take so calmly an insulting reference to an old father. Nor could she comprehend the impulse that had been urging Euphemia to long for flight from the village. This project of going to school and getting more education had not been so much as hinted at, and it had been taken for granted during the last twelvemonth that Euphemia was as good as engaged to Silas Heath. Silas was a young doctor with a growing reputation and an excellent practice. He had succeeded an old doctor who had retired three years ago, and until the last fortnight his attentions to Euphemia had been marked and continuous. Indeed, though nothing had been said about it definitely, Mrs. Clayton knew that Euphemia had for some time been gradually adding to her stock of clothes, and had

been, little by little, accumulating pretty things, which could have only one meaning; they were the beginnings of a modest trousseau.

"What will Silas say?" answered Euphemia, holding her head high and stopping at the door as she was ready to leave the room. "Silas Heath is nothing to me, mother. He is courting Virginia Grant."

Mrs. Clayton forgot her dinner and sat still, stupefied, until something boiled over on the range. Then she hurried to save the asparagus from burning and went on to set the table; glancing from the window as she went to ring the bell that summoned her husband from the field, she saw young Dr. Heath driving past in his runabout. Beside him sat a young lady in a gray traveling dress and in the conveyance was a small trunk. Evidently the doctor was escorting Virginia Grant to the midday train. Mrs. Clayton was disturbed. In her view Euphemia was not in need of a better education than she had already received. She wished fervently that her brother Jabez had not thrown his bomb-shell of a check into their peaceful camp. She believed that there was a mistake somewhere. She knew that Euphemia had a good deal of the Clayton obstinacy and for that matter, of the Barclay perversity. "To think," she said to herself, "that all those pretty clothes should be taken for a schoolgirl's wardrobe, when Euphemia cares so little for books, and never, in all the world, will make a good teacher."

At dinner that day there was little talk; but the trio were accustomed to enjoying their meals in silence, and nobody looked unhappy. By common consent, neither mother nor daughter said a word about the letter from Uncle Jabez. After dinner, Euphemia helped her mother to put away the dishes, and about three o'clock both went to the Monthly Missionary Meeting, which assembled in the parlor of the church on the green. After the meeting, the ladies lingered for a social half-hour. Mrs. Marvin,

who took summer boarders, and who was an old schoolmate of Mrs. Clayton, drew the latter into a corner. "I have lost my best boarder," she said. "That lovely Miss Grant, who came from town to be treated for neurasthenia, has gone home much better. Dr. Heath has done her a heap of good; but he says her folks must take her to some gayer neighborhood, somewhere on the shore, I reckon."

"You said she was lovely?" commented Mrs. Clayton.

"So she is, lovely and sweet and sort of helpless and spoiled. Her father was a classmate of old Sam Heath, Silas Heath's father, and he insisted on sending her here."

Though the two ladies spoke in low tones, part of the conversation drifted to Euphemia's ears. A blush mounted to her cheek, for just at the moment she saw Dr. Heath passing the church door alone. Some one told her that there had been a good deal more sickness than usual out on the Brockton turnpike. She noticed that the young doctor looked pale and fagged.

There was a splendid August moon that evening. It silvered the river and flooded the road and wrapped the old-fashioned gardens into a beautiful, mystical veil of dreamy beauty.

Euphemia sat on a bench under a great maple tree at the end of the garden, her garden, full of great roses and white lilies and fragrant phlox. She was feeling lonely and repentant, for she knew that she had been unjust and jealous without a cause. If this were to be her disposition throughout life, certainly she would never do for a doctor's wife. Uncle Jabez' letter, with the check for a hundred dollars, lay in her bureau drawer upstairs. There would be time enough to answer it on the morrow. A step came across the garden. Euphemia heard it, but did not turn her head. Presently, somebody was beside her, somebody had said, "Move a little, dear, and make room for me," and somebody's arm was around her waist. Dr. Heath took the place beside the girl as if no one had a better right. "Why have you treated me so coldly?" he said.

"Treated you coldly!" she replied. "You have not been here for the last fortnight. You have been all devotion to Virginia Grant."

"Nonsense," he answered. "I don't care a rush for Virginia Grant, and you know it, though she has been an interesting patient. I have been fighting for a man's life, dearest. Old Anthony Gilbert has been desperately ill, but he is going to pull through. There has been a lot of sickness. Yet I came twice to this tree at our trysting time when I was dead tired, too, and no Euphemia to greet me. Was that fair? Can you not trust me, when we are to be married in October, too? There, darling, don't cry." But they were happy tears that he kissed away, and next day Uncle Jabez' check went back to him.

THE "SPITE FENCE"

LUTHER SHERWOOD and his wife were lingering over their breakfast longer than usual, because of a letter which had come in the morning mail. It referred to a bit of meadow land in a village some twenty miles from New York. Within ten years this particular village had sprung into being and grown with the rapidity of Jack's famous bean-stalk. A railroad had brought the quiet farming country near enough the great city to make it attractive to people who longed for gardens and fresh air and a play-place for their children out of doors.

The bit of meadow land was all that was left of what had originally been a large farm, and it had been a wedding present to Mary Sherwood from an uncle who had sold the rest of his estate, and who told Mary to do with this precisely as she pleased. Before her marriage to Luther, who was a rising young lawyer, Mary had been a hard-working hospital nurse. One of her dreams had been to live in the country and gaze upon the hills which rimmed around the little valley where she had spent much of her childhood. They were low hills, friendly and kind, not the great stern mountains, but hills where children could play and lovers could stroll, with green spaces and trees that turned to red and gold in the autumn and made a protecting wall around the valley in the spring and summer.

Mr. Sherwood looked up from the letter as his wife handed him his cup of coffee. "The real estate man has an offer, Mary, for your wedding present. His client of-

fers to pay a generous price, considerably more than it is valued by anybody else. The man is in Italy, and will be there for a while yet. He already has large holdings in Forestville, and he has built a superb house on the site of your grandfather's old home. For some reason he especially wants the piece of ground where we have been intending to build our bungalow. Do you wish to consider the offer?"

Mary lifted her brown eyes, and her husband saw that there was no indecision in her glance. She answered without an instant's hesitation: "Whoever the man may be, Luther, he has not money enough to tempt me. We have the plans for our bungalow, and we can afford to build it without the delay of a month. I have furnished every room in my fancy. I know what is going in the south chamber, in the west room, in the dining-room and the living-room. We shall be as cosy as birds in a nest, and I can hardly wait for the time to come when we shall be householders under God's blue sky, and not go on being homeless tramps in the stifling city."

"Is this boarding-house your idea, wife. of a shelter for homeless tramps?"

"Yes, Luther, with all its luxury it is unhomelike. I am sorry to disappoint King Ahab. This persistent customer reminds me of him. We shall keep our little corner of the earth for ourselves and here we shall build our bungalow."

They carried out their plan, and as houses go up like magic when there is no strike to interfere with the labors of mason and carpenter, and the people who build have cash in hand to make their fairy dreams material, no lengthened period elapsed before the Sherwoods were safe in their own domicile. They had windows on every side, and Mary's special delight was the view from her south chamber across a field or two. The green hills that she loved seemed to her like guardian angels. A sleeping porch on

this side of the house gave it the last touch of comfort and luxury, and she went about her home-making with a light heart and little bursts of happy song.

Several months passed before the Dormans, who were her nearest neighbors, and whose garden wall came close to her boundary line, returned from their trip abroad. They had not been at home a month, when early one morning a number of workmen suddenly appeared with loads of lumber. Luther, glancing from the window, wondered what they meant to do, and Mary said she hoped they did not mean to build a shelter for cows or a series of chicken coops at this end of their plantation.

The hen coops and the cow shed would have been preferable to the sort of building John Dorman speedily erected. Higher and higher it rose, a broad and gloomy fence near enough the Sherwood home to shut out completely their view of the hills and to make the south chamber, which was Mary's especial pride, a prison cell instead of an airy lodgment. The sleeping porch was not ruined for sleeping purposes, but it, too, was robbed of its greatest attractiveness, and the spite fence, a great, ill tempered barrier, reared itself, a blot upon the landscape and an eyesore which Luther and Mary resented hour by hour, as they looked upon it.

Remonstrance proved in vain. Mr. Dorman declared himself within his legal rights, and upon investigation Mr. Sherwood found himself helpless. "Sell me your bungalow," said the millionaire; "give me the land I want and settle anywhere else in this village that you choose. There are plenty of other spots in Forestville where you would be as comfortable as you are in this neighborhood. Unless you oblige me, my fence shall remain where it is."

Luther might have yielded, but the blood of the Puritans flowed in the veins of Mary and she obstinately declined so much as to consider any proposition coming from the Dormans. One day as she was sitting with her book

on the other side of the house where she could not see the objectionable fence, she had a visitor. It was John Dorman's wife. The lady approached Mary timidly. "My dear," she said, "you know who I am. I want you to know that I hate that fence as much as you do, and am ashamed of it through and through. I have used every argument in my power, but my husband is as stubborn as the Rock of Gibraltar. I had to come and tell you and let you know that I have had no share in this wretched business. As woman to woman, I have come to ask you to forgive John and pray with me that something may break down his wicked obstinacy."

Something did break down his obstinacy, and that before many days. John Dorman had one idol whom he loved and worshiped. It was not his gentle wife, whose influence with him was so slight that she could not move him from his purpose; it was his only daughter, Mabel, fifteen, the light of his eyes and the pride of his heart. He had a heart. Most men have. The testing time came when Mabel was suddenly taken desperately ill between midnight and morning. The doctor, sent for in a hurry, said that he must have a nurse at once, and when Mr. Dorman spoke of telephoning to the city, declared he could not wait. "The best hospital nurse I ever knew," said Dr. Trent, "is living right next door; Mrs. Sherwood, who used to be Mary Bean. She will come if I ask her, and if the little girl is to be saved there is not an hour to lose. Not a minute, in fact. Stand aside, man, and let me get to the telephone."

There is a verse in the Bible about heaping coals of fire on the head of one's foe. When Mary Sherwood, practical, efficient and resourceful, entered the home of John Dorman and labored hour after hour with Dr. Trent to save the life of John Dorman's child, the ice in his heart thawed swiftly before the blaze of her compassionate goodness. When at last the danger was over and the doctor,

drawing a long breath of relief, said across the bed to the mother and the nurse, "We've conquered in this fight, thank God!" the two women clasped their arms about one another and their lips met. It was a kiss of gratitude and a token of friendship never to be broken.

The foundations of the world seemed to John Dorman to have given way beneath his feet in the hours when his child's life was trembling in the balance. Such experiences come to parents when the issue is not, as in the Dorman household, one of deliverance from peril and continued gladness. The man realized, as he saw his child lying white as a lily on her bed, that instead of having her still with him, an unspeakable joy, he might have had only the hush of death in the house and a grave in the cemetery over which to set a stone. All at once the paltriness of his obstinacy, its selfishness, its shamefulness, were revealed to him as by a searchlight. The doctor, going away, promised to return in the course of the morning, and said as he left, "You owe a debt which it will be hard to pay to Mrs. Sherwood. She knew just what to do and how to do it." Then, as if obeying an impulse, the doctor laid his hand on Mr. Dorman's shoulder. "Don't you think, friend," he said, "that you would better turn that fence of yours into kindling wood?" He awaited no reply.

Downstairs in the library Luther Sherwood alone listened for Mary to come to him. He had brought her over, and stayed in the house to see if there were anything he could do. Mr. Dorman entered the room, advanced and took his neighbor's hand. "Pardon me," he said; "I have been a fool and a mule and everything hateful. If you'll forgive me I'll be a better man and a better neighbor."

Thanksgiving that year was kept with the voice of joy and praise in two homes of Forestville. Mabel, completely restored to health, little dreamed how precious she had become to the father and mother who had faced the prospect

of losing her. The Thanksgiving they kept was without a flaw. The bungalow where Luther and Mary were host and hostess to a circle of kindred and friends was flooded with sunlight, and the beloved hills again wore, in Mary's eyes, the look of guardian angels. There was no sign of the spite fence. It had been split into kindling wood and had gone to the fire.

THE BEAUTIFUL MISS BLARCOM

THE "Blarcom girls," as they had been called in Hinckley for forty years, had each a special characteristic. One was "The talented Miss Blarcom." She wrote poetry and painted pictures, and the townspeople were very proud of her fame, prouder than she was herself of the one book, "A Wreath of Roses," which bore her name on its cover. Another sister was "The amiable Miss Blarcom." She was splendid at fairs and festivals, and from her early childhood had possessed the rare and sweet distinction of settling the village quarrels, she being of that race, of whom our Lord said, "Blessed are the peace-makers." The third was "The practical Miss Blarcom." If it hadn't been for her I do not know how the Blarcom sisters would have managed to live as nicely as they did on the little income their father left them, such a small provision against the inroads of poverty. But Eugenia Blarcom knew better than most women how to make both ends of a narrow income meet. She took a lodger now and then; when artists came to sketch the fine points in the neighborhood, or lecturers to entertain the people of the place, or the teachers at the Academy needed a home outside of the school limits, all these could obtain comfortable quarters and be looked after carefully, by going to the Blarcoms' and putting themselves under the wing of Miss Eugenia.

But Adele had the prettiest adjective of all tacked to her name. Far and near this dear lady was known as the "Beautiful Miss Blarcom."

She was no longer young, that is her girlhood was well past, and she had kept her thirty-ninth birthday. When she was eighteen, she had met with an accident which had hurt her back, and from that time on Adele Blarcom had been an invalid, spending many quiet hours on her lounge, never able to walk beyond the garden, seldom strong enough

to go for anything beyond a short drive, and often a great sufferer.

One would have supposed that the conditions of her existence might easily have robbed Adele of her loveliness of face, of the fine bloom on her cheek, the soft smoothness of her forehead, the starry luster of her eyes, the firm serenity of her mouth. Not so. As the slow years passed, and she still sat in the Master's own class, in his great school of suffering disciples, she grew constantly not only more attractive in disposition, but always lovelier and more captivating in her appearance.

Doctor Frazier had a new patient in his sanatorium. She was a Miss Reed, from a large Western town, a woman of fortune, who had had the world at her feet, and in having the world "too much with her, late and soon," had verified the poet's assertion. Living and spending had "laid waste her powers," and nervous prostration was the result. It was a stubborn case. Miss Reed defied Dr. Frazier's skill. She baffled him, and no matter what tactics he employed, she simply lay back in her easy chair, unable to lift a finger, and quite without the smallest interest in life.

The Doctor was talking about her to his wife, who, being a doctor, too, and a sensitive, up-to-date sort of woman as well, was her husband's best assistant.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Mrs. Frazier, or Doctor Polly, as she liked to be called. "We'll invite the beautiful Miss Blarcom here to make us a visit, and she shall help us cure Miss Reed."

"Do you think the girls will let her come?" asked the Doctor, doubtfully, pulling the long ends of his gray moustache.

"Oh, I'll talk it over with Eugenia, and make it worth her while to lend us Adele. I'll offer a fee for the privilege of having Adele under our roof for a fortnight."

"Well"—said Dr. Frazier, with a little shrug of his shoulders, as who should say, "I shake off this burden and

leave the responsibility with you, my love"—"well, my darling, if anybody can manage the affair you can, only I don't want either of the ladies, Miss Reed or Miss Blarcom, to suspect the reason for our bringing them together."

"I wish," said Mrs. Polly, with much dignity, "that you did not always find it necessary, Jack, to treat me as if I was a child. I hate to be cautioned against telling this or that, and advised in matters concerning which I know as much as you do, more in fact, since you are only a big, blundering old fellow, as good as gold, but only a man, after all."

"I beg your pardon, wifie," said the Doctor, very humbly, stooping to kiss his small partner in business, and pinching her cheek playfully. "You have a sharp little tongue of your own, Polly, but you have a sound heart, and much good sense, and I never lay it up against you when you scold me."

"You shouldn't, Jack, for you are never scolded, except when you deserve to be," retorted Mrs. Polly, who always liked to have the last word.

Mrs. Frazier succeeded in her mission, convincing the sisters that a change would do Miss Adele good, and so, before the week was over, she was transferred to a sunny southwestern room in the sanatorium, with flowers in the windows, a canary in its cage, and a big gray cat which never glanced at the bird, basking most of the time on the soft rug before the open fire. No "fee" had been so much as offered, but the practical sister took the opportunity of Adele's absence, to thoroughly clean her room at home, and to newly paper the walls.

Miss Reed was lying back as usual, listless and vacant, in her chair, when there came a soft tap at her door, and in walked the beautiful Miss Blarcom. She had a cluster of lilies in her hand, and she resembled a lily herself, tall, white, graceful, and carrying about a subtle sense of fragrance, the faintest ghost of a sweet perfume.

"May I give you these flowers?" she said, "they match your lace and your soft crepe shawl, and when I left my own chamber, I had to bring them with me, for they've been my best friends so long. It's such a happy thing, isn't it, to be alive, and to bloom?"

The words were not much, but the tone, and the smile, went to Miss Reed's heart.

"I don't find it so very nice," she said. "I think it's dull. I haven't seen anything new in two whole years, and I've been around the globe."

"You have, dear? How fine! I've not been so far from home as I am this morning in ten years, and I live only a mile away."

The two gradually fell into talk, bit by bit. One day, for their talk was at first only for five minutes, then another time for a half hour, then for a morning, Miss Reed said:

"Won't you please tell me how you managed to keep the wrinkles away from your face, and to remain so pretty, when you've had so much pain? The corners of your mouth don't droop, and there is no frown between your eyes, and you haven't any crows'-feet to speak of."

"I've had a soft cushion under my head always," said Adele, gravely.

"A soft cushion?"

"Yes, dear Miss Reed, the blessed will of God. Day after day I've said to myself, God knows, God cares, God loves, I am his dear child. The will of God has been to me a cushion, and the peace of God has been to me a balm. I have simply taken my life a minute at a time. God always gives me strength for one minute. Every one of my days is a gift from Him, and if He sends me a pain and weakness, I do not mind, for His face is my light in the darkness, and his arms are under me, and I hear Him whisper, "Lean on me, dear child, lean on me, child of my love."

"And that is why you are the beautiful Miss Blarcom!" said Miss Reed. "I, too, will claim a child's right and lean on my Lord, and accept his will."

ELBERT ANSEL'S THANKSGIVING

ELBERT ANSEL stirred uneasily in his chair beside the kitchen stove. He was apparently reading the county paper, which came once a week, and brought the Ansel household its only news of the outside world; but, in reality, he was listening intently to the conversation of his wife and daughter. They were making plans which did not please him. As their low-toned talk went on, a perpendicular frown deepened in his low forehead, making a deep furrow between the eyes. Finally he laid the paper down on his knees, and sat bolt upright, a brown hand on either arm of the splint-bottomed chair. Mrs. Ansel and Julia kept right on, taking no notice of him and his silent perturbation. At last he could stand it no longer, and spoke in a sort of rumbling growl, with which Julia had been familiar from her childhood.

"All stuff and nonsense! It will cost money, and I won't have it."

Mrs. Ansel made no reply. Julia looked around, smiling.

"What is it, father? Is there anything I can do?"

Mr. Ansel's frown grew deeper. He had been a little under the weather, but was better, and it was only the usual absence of oppressive work in the late autumn that made him content to hug the fire. Added to this was a curiosity, peculiar to a meddling disposition, that always made him eager to know what was on foot in the family.

"I said, Julia, that you and your mother might as well stop these proceedings you are planning. They'll cost

money—hard cash—and I won't have 'em. We can't waste money, Julia."

Mrs. Ansel still said nothing. Her plump, placid face did not change its expression by so much as a shade. She moved across the room, and quietly took up her mending basket. Putting on her spectacles, she began to darn her husband's thick woolen socks. They were gray socks.

But Julia flared up like a flame blown by a puff of wind. Julia's cheeks were hot. Her eyes glowed.

"Father!"

The word was thrown out with force, as if some inward explosiveness sent it forth.

"Well, Julia?"

"Do you mean to say that when mother, who hasn't been away from home for fifteen years in summer's heat or winter's cold, is invited to spend a holiday with Aunt Bertha in her old home in town, you'd oppose it; you wouldn't let her go because the trip would cost something? When has mother, when have any of us, known the least bit of fun or good times? The boys were driven from their home by the everlasting misery of saving money that ought to have been spent. I wouldn't stay here one day if it were not for mother. I tell you, father, there are things in this world better than money, more worth seeking after; things like love, and happiness, and comfort."

She stopped quite out of breath. Her mother, with eyes fixed on her mending, and a hand that never wavered, did not change either attitude or expression. But Elbert Ansel had risen, and faced Julia angrily.

"You are an undutiful daughter," he said. "The place for women folks is in the house, not gadding about the country as if they were wild. You and your mother have all you need. Let me hear no more about this business. You'll not have one penny of my money to go visiting this month, either of you. And further, if you should go, which you won't, you'll both stay till I come after you. Bertha

never had the sense of a clucking hen, and she grows worse as she grows older."

He reached for his hat from a peg where it hung, put on his old overcoat, green with successive seasons of use, and threadbare, but well wadded and warm, and stamped heavily outside, slamming the door as he went.

Julia, her eyes full of tears, sank into the chair he had left. Presently she broke into sobs like a disappointed child.

"Mother, mother," she exclaimed, "it seems beyond bearing, beyond belief. My father is the richest man in this part of the State and we are poorer than the poorest; so helpless, so tied hand and foot. Never a pleasure, never a change, never even a little glimmer of light. I almost hate father. Sometimes I think I hate God!"

The mother rolled up the pair of socks she had finished mending, glanced from the window out to the barn where old Elbert was pottering about in a lumbering fashion, that showed him still angry and aggrieved, and then she said a surprising thing.

"Don't take on so, Julia. Hush, dear! You and I will go to Bertha's and have a pleasant visit. We'll take father at his word, and stay until he comes after us. Now, behave as usual, my dear. Nothing is gained by storming at an Ansel, and Elbert is the stubbornest Ansel that ever was born."

"Mother," cried Julia, breathlessly, "did you ever love my father?"

"I love him now," quietly answered Elbert Ansel's wife, and the daughter, wondering, said nothing more. For her own part, she was pretty sure that her love, if it ever had existed, had been winter-killed, and would not revive. How her mother would accomplish her purpose she could not imagine, but she had boundless faith in her mother's word, and from that moment, through the next day or two, she simply did her mother's bidding, watched and waited.

When old Elbert returned from the barn, the house had

resumed its air of tranquillity. The cat purred peacefully beside the stove; the table was set, and ham and eggs, sputtering cheerfully, were being fried for supper. Mrs. Ansel took her seat at the table and poured the hot coffee, sweetening her husband's cup abundantly with brown sugar, and Julia helped to the dried apple sauce and the raisin cake, eating her own meal with good appetite.

"You cut the cake too thick, Julia," said her father. "We are not to waste the Lord's bounties."

But he finished his piece notwithstanding, and with something akin to a pleased or placated look on his sharp features, again took up the paper over which he had been interrupted in the afternoon. When the dishes were washed, Julia went into the other room, and sat down to the piano. Presently the sound of music, sweet, full, and silvery, filled the house.

"If the piano were moved in here for the cold weather, Mary, Julia could play without having another fire," Julia's father said, tentatively for once, as if he offered a suggestion, not as if issuing a command.

"You know, Elbert, she pays for the wood herself, out of her earnings, and she bought the piano, too."

"But I paid for her music lessons."

"No, Elbert, you never paid a cent for the children's education, except in taxes. I gave her the lessons. Let her play the piano in peace."

There was a note of firmness in Mrs. Ansel's voice, and her husband heeded it. Rather apologetically, he said: "If you could give Julia a hint, Mary, to be more respectful when she's talking to me, I would be obliged. She is very uncouth, very uncouth indeed. None of the other children ever spoke to me as she does."

Mrs. Ansel was silent. In the course of thirty years, spent with a crabbed husband, she had learned that silence is golden.

Away back in the days of their youth, Elbert Ansel had

been a sufficiently devoted lover. That he was "near," and grudged parting with money, she soon ascertained; but this one defect apart, he was a faithful husband, a conscientious man, and a useful deacon in the church. The farm was not wholly clear at first; they saved to pay for it, then Elbert coveted more land, and it was bought. He did not withhold money when it was needed to buy stock, or farm implements, or to build barns and outhouses. But for the clothing of wife and children, for extras of any kind, for what he considered superfluities, no money was forthcoming. Mrs. Ansel soon found that her friends received a very cold welcome. Company caused extra expense. The children went to an uncle's or an aunt's for Thanksgiving, by their mother's management.

The elder girl, Marion, married early and happily, and went a few miles away to live in her own home. That house became her mother's refuge, and a place where Julia could meet her friends, as she bloomed into youthful womanhood.

On the evening of our story, Elbert went to bed. His wife and daughter sat up late. Elbert Ansel was aware of nothing different from the ordinary routine the rest of the week. He was called to the court-house on business, a drive of several miles, and, to his own disgust, was soon summoned to serve on a jury.

Mrs. Ansel calmly went on with her work, cooking a great store of pies which she laid away on the buttery shelves, making generous brown loaves, and boiling a ham. It was an obvious provisioning for an emergency.

When Marion heard her mother's decision to go away, she gasped; then sat down and laughed until she cried. Finally, she said, earnestly: "Oh, if you only, only had done it sooner."

"I never could have done it sooner, dear. Never, until this fall, when your uncle in Colorado sent me a letter with a hundred-dollar bill in it, about which I have kept my own

counsel, and I had money enough that I could get at to do any little independent thing with. I am sure I am doing right. Only, Marion, keep watch, and if your father is ill, let me know. We may have to stay all winter."

Mr. Ansel's jury duty ended one cold afternoon late in November. He drove into his barnyard, about dusk, unharnessed, and went into the house. The lamp was lighted on the table. Supper was set for one. Beside his plate lay a note from his wife, saying briefly, "Julia and I have gone to New York, to spend Thanksgiving with my sister Bertha. I have left everything very comfortable for you. Be sure to put on your thickest flannels the first cold spell. Alice Pearsall will do your washing. We have decided to stay until you come for us."

The clock had never ticked so loudly. The house was as silent as the grave. But the obstinate old man set his jaw with a grimness like death.

"Stay till I go after ye, hey?" he said to himself. "Then ye'll stay some time."

At Sister Bertha's, Mary Ansel entered a world from which she had been so long excluded that she had almost forgotten its passwords. Her boys came tearing up to see her; two brought their wives; her old friends clustered about her, and she was carried about to the big shops, with their bewildering variety of beautiful things; to museums, and picture-galleries, and parks, and every day was a gala day. She bought a new gown, and had it prettily made, and a new bonnet that took ten years off her face.

It would have given her a turn if she could have peeped into her home, and seen Elbert's housekeeping. The shining neatness was gone. The old man did not shave. He and the house looked unkempt together.

"If she don't want to come home, she may stay where she is," he said stubbornly, over and over in the silent house. "If Julia had not acted so hatefully, her mother wouldn't have thought of going away on a fool's errand." Seeing

Julia's photograph smiling at him from her mother's bureau, he thrust it resentfully into the bottom drawer. He even seized his wife's picture with the same intention, but, on second thoughts, he put it back.

Somehow the little picture of his wife began to appeal to him. He had not shaved in a week, but on Sunday, when he did, Mary's eyes kept gazing at him, Mary's mouth smiled.

Thanksgiving was very near now.

A sleigh jingled merrily past one morning, then stopping, turned. It was Marion, who ran in, saying:

"I thought you'd like to know, daddy, that mother's having the time of her life. Aunt Bert writes that she looks perfectly fine. They are all well."

"Humph," said old Ansel.

"I brought you some bread," said Marion, laying down a loaf.

He walked down the village street that day, and it seemed to him that everybody looked at him askance. At last Cy Hilton, the storekeeper, a man Elbert Ansel much disliked, remarked casually:

"Heard tell your wife had left you. Be she getting a divorce?"

Ansel stalked out of the store without ceremony. But he had not stepped into his sleigh when Lawyer Ames, a foxy little man, put out a limp hand.

"Ansel, if you need my assistance, come to me. Mrs. Ansel's not coming back, they say."

The minister passed him, bowing stiffly. Ansel got into his sleigh and drove home.

But very early next morning, a passenger, muffled up to the eyes, stepped into the city-going train. And late next afternoon a man, gray, grim, embarrassed, but on the whole penitent, rang the door-bell of a house on an uptown street.

Light seemed to flow out from the open door in a great golden flood. The house was full of children, darting hither

and thither with joyous shouts. They were playing merry games in the far end of a brilliant drawing-room. Julia, in a white gown, was flitting to and fro. Seated in a low chair by an open fire, with a baby in her arms, was Mary, her face so radiant, her eyes so calm that the old man stood tongue-tied and amazed on the threshold. Mary and this baby! Was it a grandchild, Jim's or Jack's son, maybe? The old man had so forgotten his flesh and blood in his absorbing passion that he had not cared whether or not the boys were married. But this child looked as little Jim used to, and Mary had once held her own babies in that same close way—the mother-way.

The man suddenly felt old and cold and desolate. The tidy maid stared at him, bewildered. Was this some lunatic?

"Whom did you say, sir?" she asked. But just then some impulse made Mary Ansel turn. She gave Jim's boy to his mother. She ran to her old husband and put both arms around his neck. "Come in, dear," she said. "Dinner's over, but you shall have some. We are all here. Bertha, Julia, come quick! Here is Elbert, and our Thanksgiving is now complete."

THE HOMECOMING OF NANCY

NANCY BEALES looked at herself in the glass. The little mirrow showed her a young face, round and rosy, with dancing lights in the brown eyes and dimples in the cheeks. Nancy was twenty and had the beauty of her years. "How I wish," she said to herself, "that anywhere in this house we had a long glass, one that would let me see how my dress hangs. Never mind, I am going to the city and there I shall have a chance to see the fashions." She glanced with satisfaction at her trunk, already locked and strapped, and packed with the results of her summer's sewing. Nancy had lived in the country all her life. She was going to town to take a business position. The money she would earn as a clerk in a department store seemed very large to her, and she had visions of delight as she thought of the change that would presently come to her fortunes. Her father called from the foot of the stairs that he was going over to the village with a load from the mill, and said he might as well carry the trunk over then, buy her ticket and get her check, as to wait until the afternoon train, which Nancy was to take.

"All right, daddy," she answered him. "The trunk is waiting for you, and I'll help you carry it down."

Mr. Beales was a man in middle life, a little bent with toil, a little gray, but with keen eyes and a firm mouth, a man of even temper and strong will. It was not his wish that his only daughter should leave her home to stand behind a counter and sell goods to strangers. He would have preferred her staying with her mother, helping in the daily round, going about with the young people in the village, and after a while settling down and marrying, as

his wife and he had done when they were at Nancy's age. But the girl had her share of the modern restlessness, and had visions of a career wider and fuller of opportunities than any afforded in her rural home. She wanted to get away. It was the longing of the young bird to fly from the home nest and try the strength of pinion somewhere else. Nancy's father had written to an old friend and schoolmate, who was pastor of a city church, asking him and his wife for the sake of old times to extend a friendly greeting to his daughter. "She will bring you a line from me, and I want her to be in your church and Sunday school," the good man had said. "Everything in your big city will be new to Nancy, and I expect she will lose some illusions, but it is best for us to let her go."

The mother was very silent when the family sat down to their mid-day meal. It would be lonesome for her when her daughter was gone. She would not have minded sending Nancy away on a visit to a relative or a classmate. When the girl had gone for a year to the academy in the neighboring county her mother had borne the separation with courage and cheerfulness. This parting of the ways was different. Nancy in her complete absorption in her own affairs had not noticed that her mother was less well than usual this autumn. Indeed, Mrs. Beales was so patient and so seldom alluded to pain or fatigue that even her husband had not observed her increasing thinness and her pallor. She was losing ground week by week, as women do who draw too freely on their capital of health in reserve. The only person who had noticed that Mrs. Beales was not well was Dr. Irving, who was acquainted with the health of the countryside as nobody but a country doctor of long experience ever is. Half way to the station with Nancy's trunk, Mr. Beales encountered Dr. Irving driving, as he generally did, at a rather rapid pace. He pulled up when he saw the miller, with a cordial "Hello, Beales! What's this I hear about Nancy? It isn't true, is it, that

you are letting her go to New York to be a saleswoman on Sixth Avenue?"

"Why, yes, doctor," Mr. Beales answered. "Mother and I have talked it over, and we thought the only thing to do was to let Nancy have her head. She has been straining at the halter for the last twelve months, and she will never be satisfied until she discovers for herself what business life means to a clever young girl, who thinks she is setting her foot on the lowest round of the ladder. Nancy has brains and she means to rise."

"Amos Beales," said the doctor, seriously, "you and Hannah are making the biggest mistake of your lives. Nancy is needed this minute in your own home as she never was before. Your wife is far from well, man, and I am afraid she is going to break down. Her daughter ought to stay beside her. If Hannah and Nancy could have gone together for an outing I would not have said a word, but I don't like this. I don't like this." So saying, the doctor drove on, and Mr. Beales proceeded soberly to the station.

Arrangements had been made for Nancy to share a room with a young woman who had been a former neighbor. It was she who had written Nancy of a vacancy in the R. & T. Department Store, and had made the engagement for her. She met Nancy at the Grand Central, and as they wended their way through the station and the crowd of eager men gesticulating and shouting, "Keb, keb," at the top of their lungs, finally reaching a crowded street car, the tired girl thought that arriving in town was not much like stepping off in the peaceful station up country. "I'll take you to supper," said her friend, "in the restaurant where I usually get my breakfast and lunch. Now that there will be two of us to share light housekeeping, it will probably be cheaper for us to get our own breakfast. I know all the best places to go to, and I will soon show you how we business girls contrive to live in this big city." The meal was

good of its kind and not very expensive, but the crowd, the clatter of knives and forks, the hurry and confusion, and above all, the air of aloofness and indifference in the faces around her gave Nancy a sinking of the heart. Everything, even at first, was a contrast to what she had painted it in her mind. Miss Fosdick piloted her to the room that was to be her lodging and would be their united lodging. It was a fairly good-sized room, furnished with two iron beds, a bureau, a small table and two chairs, one a rocker. Nancy gazed at it without enthusiasm. Miss Fosdick saw the disappointment in her face, but said nothing. She had gone through the same phase of feeling in her time, and had often before witnessed it in country girls. When dreams are rudely dissipated by harsh realities there is a mental shock.

"We are in great luck to have this room, Nancy," said Miss Fosdick with decision. "The house is clean and the landlady accommodating. She does not mind our washing little things out in our own room, and she often lets us iron small pieces in her kitchen in the evening. The expenses of laundry in town are simply appalling. Then we are only five minutes from the store and that is a thing to be thankful for. Here comes your trunk. Goodness, child, what made you bring so large a one!"

"I needed things to wear," said Nancy.

"Yes, but you didn't need a trousseau. I wrote you about the black dress and collar and cuffs, didn't I? The uniform is compulsory in the store."

"I understood that," said Nancy, "but won't there be evenings and Saturday afternoons and Sundays?"

"Yes," said Emily Fosdick, "there will, and we girls often contrive pleasant little trips for the half holiday, but at night you'll be too tired after standing on your feet all day to care about making a dainty toilet. Probably you will change your dress. I always do, because it rests me to get out of the shop uniform and put on a fresh

waist and skirt, but you'll want to go to bed very early for the first three months, and on Sundays you may be too tired to go to church. I don't go very regularly. It takes a lot of time to forage for meals. It won't be necessary for you to unpack all your clothes; most of them you would better keep in your trunk."

Nancy went to bed very thoughtful. As she knelt to say her good-night prayer there was a sigh in her heart that might easily have been a sob, but she controlled herself bravely. The next few weeks were hard ones for her. She found it difficult to learn the routine and to bear with the impatience and unreason of customers. It annoyed her to be obliged to consult the floor-walker on occasions when she thought she could manage an affair for herself. The long standing made her feet ache and her head throb. She missed her mother's cooking and sorely missed the merry twinkle in her father's eye and the sweetness of her mother's companionship.

She realized at the end of a week that the money in her envelope was much less than she had anticipated, because very nearly all of it was consumed in expenses. On Sunday Nancy went to church, and lingered after the service to meet the minister, who had been her father's friend. His wife and he were very cordial and the latter urged her to become a member of the Sunday school and the Christian Endeavor. The lady was turning away when an afterthought struck her, and she said, "Come home with us to dinner, my dear." The homesick Nancy accepted the invitation with genuine gratitude. It was by this time a treat to be a guest at a home table, and the minister's daughter, a girl of her own age, asked her to her special den when dinner was over. This pretty room, with its white bed and curtains, its books and pictures, was what Nancy had thought of when she had imagined herself in New York. Anything like this was an impossibility to a new girl at the ribbon counter, as Nancy had speedily found out.

"You would have done better," said her new friend after a little conversation, "if you had studied stenography and typewriting. Father spoke of it when your father's letter came. He felt some surprise that you had not thought of that. You could have done so much better financially and, pardon me for saying it, but father thinks you did not have to come and take just this situation. I am afraid it will wear you completely out." By a freemasonry that exists between girls of similar age and taste who have congenial sympathies, these two had become familiar in a very short time. Nancy smiled as she said, frankly, "If I had been willing to listen to the dear home people I need not have come away at all. I fancy my father did not want it to be too easy for me; but I'm not going to give up at once on account of a few obstacles. I felt as if I wanted independence."

"Well," said Ruth, "lots of girls feel just that way, but to me it seems as if there is nothing so sweet as being a home daughter."

The days went by, one by one, through October and November, and Nancy watched for the home letters almost as one in the desert looks across wide spaces for an oasis. She divined her mother's endeavor to write cheerfully. One day there came a letter from her father, brief and to the point. "Nancy, you must drop everything and come home at once. I enclose money for your ticket in case your purse is low. Do not delay an instant. Your mother is very ill and Dr. Irving is anxious." Nancy Beales never forgot the morning of her return. Not to waste time she had traveled by night. The stage had been at the station and she had stepped into it, the only passenger. "I'm heartily glad to see you back, Nancy," the driver had said as he took her hand into his rough palm. "Your mother's pretty sick, but my wife says she's been pining for you, and I guess she'll turn the corner soon as you're back where you belong."

"Back where you belong!" That's what Nancy said to herself as the stage rattled on. Old Jabez Brown was a great talker, but she heard scarcely a word and said yes and no at random. When she reached her own house she ran in and ran, as it happened, straight into her father's arms. "I didn't look for you, dear, until tonight," he said in a low voice. "Mrs. Hill has been sitting up with your mother and she was just going to carry in her breakfast. Suppose you take it instead."

"Is mother so weak?" inquired Nancy.

"She is pretty weak, but seeing you will make her stronger. Darling, had you thought that this is Thanksgiving Day?"

Nancy had quite forgotten it, but it proved to be the best Thanksgiving she had ever known. With her return, with her young arm to relieve her mother and with her happiness in taking up simple duty once more, joy came to her and health to her mother. Nancy Beales remembered it always as a perfect day, though they put off the Thanksgiving dinner for a whole fortnight.

A GLIMPSE OF HIMSELF

THE day had been unusually trying, and Mrs. Elmore was very tired when at last she had tucked her babies into bed and seen Bridget walk down the street for her evening call on the sister who lived just around the corner. Mrs. Elmore turned up the lamp and laid the new Christian Herald invitingly uppermost on the pile of papers and magazines, which she hoped would tempt her husband to read something aloud for her entertainment. Her own evening work was laid out in a basket, which overflowed with stockings to mend, with little aprons, frocks and trousers in need of repairs, and with the new gown which she was by degrees evolving for herself from two half worn ones. Everybody's basket of work is full, as mothers know, but Mrs. Elmore's was overfull, for she had a large family and was a scrupulously neat housekeeper, who had never acquired the art of slighting a single thing in the day's routine. Often of late she had been aware of something new in her experience—a sense of loneliness and depression such as she had never felt before, and her nerves, hitherto so firm, had grown unsteady. What she needed was rest and a break, a chance to drop her work for a little while; but if ever she thought about this, the possibility was so remote that she bravely put the idea out of her mind as not to be considered at all.

One thing she did covet, and that she was increasingly deprived of—the pleasure of her husband's society in the evenings. John Elmore was a good citizen, a good workman at his trade, and a good provider in his home. When they were first married, he and Mary were constantly with each other, but gradually a change had come to pass. She

was occupied with the care of her little group of sons and daughters, all close together like steps, and he became interested in outside affairs—in the school board, the town improvement, the building fund association, and, more than all, in the club.

Mrs. Elmore approved of public spirit in her husband, and was proud of him as a rising man. But when, six nights out of seven, she sat alone in her little parlor, sewing or reading, not a soul to relieve the monotony, she sometimes felt that she would prefer to have John's company, even if John had less to do for the public welfare.

The parlor looked very pretty, a bunch of golden-rod and purple asters on the mantel, and the big chair for John pushed into the best place for reading.

Presently John came in; a big, blond man, with blue eyes and a shock of yellow hair, six foot two, and as handsome as a picture. Mrs. Elmore lifted her eyes to his and sighed.

"You are in evening dress, John? And I thought you meant to spend this night with me."

"This night? Why, is there any special reason, Molly? The club is to receive General Frenchson and his staff, and I am on the committee. I wish it were a ladies' night, but it isn't, and I couldn't well plead an excuse. If you had mentioned it this morning, little woman, I might have begged off, but it's too late now!"

"It's our wedding anniversary, John—that's all!"

"Sure enough, and I forgot it completely. Never mind, darling; forgive your old husband, and we'll keep it up in fine style when it comes round again next year. Good-bye, Mary. There are Harry Post and Frank Barclay at the door waiting for me."

A kiss and a nod, and John was gone.

As for Mary, she put her work aside, and bowing her face in her hands, cried, hot, scalding tears dropping one by one as if pressed out of her heart. She cried silently,

the words beating over and over in her brain: "He forgot our wedding day, and he doesn't care." Something that had bound her fast to John in a ring of wifely trust and love suddenly scorched and bit her as if it had been a fetter. Mary Elmore's gaze went back over the past twelve months. Her solitary evenings, her incessant housework, the babies upstairs, the baby that was coming, and it was overwhelming—the feeling that her good times were passed, and this hard life was to go on forever.

In the midst of her tears there was a knock at the door, and Mary never heard it. The visitor waited a second, turned the knob and came in. It was John's Aunt Phebe, a great friend of the family, and Mary's particular ally and helper.

"Why, Mary!" she exclaimed. "Why, Mary!"

"Oh—Aunt Phebe!"

"What is it, dear? Tell me!"

"A headache," stammered Mrs. Elmore.

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Phebe. "People cry themselves into headaches, not over them. Tell me what has happened?"

"Indeed, aunty, I have nothing to tell," answered the wife, too loyal to complain of her lord. "I was tired and melancholy, and the blues got the better of me. I'm glad you came in."

"So am I," declared her aunt; "and now that I'm here I'll just sit awhile, and if you are tired out you go to bed. John's at the club, I presume, and won't be back till midnight. Lucy Anne will stop for me when her Browning class has finished its session, and in the meantime I'll amuse myself."

Mrs. Elmore yielded. She was in no mood to converse, and, indeed, felt too ill to be company for any one. She went to her room, and soon, mercifully, slept the deep sleep of exhaustion.

When, at the stroke of twelve, John Elmore came home,

he was amazed to see a bright light still in the parlor, it not being Mary's habit to sit up for him. He tiptoed up the garden walk, and was surprised at that hour to see Aunt Phebe and her daughter calmly established there, deep in conversation. No Mary was visible. John was about to open the door and enter when he heard his own name, and was arrested with the surprise one naturally feels when he hears himself discussed.

Aunt Phebe was talking in a low voice, but her tones were emphatic.

"I'm sorry, Lucy Anne, but I'm not going away till my nephew comes home, if it's two o'clock in the morning. You may sleep later tomorrow to make up for this. John is a most thoughtless, selfish and ordinary fellow, and I'm afraid the Elmore blood is cropping out. I used to fancy he was more Wilkinson than Elmore, but I was mistaken."

"John is slowly killing Mary," were the next words John heard. Lucy Anne said them in her positive way. Lucy Anne, whom John had tossed in the air when she was a roly-poly baby, and whom he regarded, now that she was a beautiful girl, with an air of cousinly proprietorship!

"She's not going to be so easily killed," said Aunt Phebe, whose keen eyes and ears had taken note of the listener at the door; "but he is killing her love—and that's worse! He does not drink or gamble or beat his wife, he simply neglects her—shoves her into a corner of his life and goes on his own way. John likes to be with men, he enjoys a jolly evening, and he fancies that Mary is well off and happy because she is at home with her children. You notice, do you not, how seldom John goes to church with Mary now? He is too tired, after a Saturday night at the club, to attend church on Sunday morning."

"Well," Lucy Anne chimed in, "if Edgar Brewster had married Mary Allen, it would have been different. He

courted her when John did, and he has never married. They say in Lincoln that Edgar never got over his disappointment when she refused him."

"She was very pretty," said Aunt Phebe, "but she's losing her good looks fast. Flowers do when frost blights them. Well, I must go home after all. Turn the lamp down, Lucy Anne, and tread softly. The poor child is asleep, and I hope isn't going to be ill, but Dr. Ames is worried about her. He told me yesterday she's on the road to nervous prostration. If she has to go to a sanatorium it'll make a hole in John's savings. His sister Jane could come and take care of the house. Come, daughter, we'll just slip off home."

John softly stepped round the corner of the porch till his relatives were out of sight. He had heard some rather plain truth, and he was wholesomely wounded. All the evening he had had an uneasy sense of meanness, in leaving his wife alone to spend her wedding evening. Now he perceived how he looked through Aunt Phebe's eyes.

"I am a selfish brute!" he muttered, as he went upstairs in his stockinged feet.

Mary was asleep and did not stir. Her husband looked at her. There were hollows in the cheeks that had been so round, and silver threads were showing in the dark brown hair. Her face had the grieved look that a child wears when she has sobbed herself into dreamland. A sharp compunction pricked John's heart. He tried to undress very quietly, and in the effort made considerable noise. He dropped the hair brush on the floor and knocked over a chair in the endeavor to be perfectly still.

Mary awoke. "That you, John?"

"Yes, Molly."

"It's most morning, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid so, Mary. But," and the big hand stole tenderly under the cover and took hers, which lay in his unresisting, but with no returning pressure, "I'm ashamed

of myself, and I beg your pardon, dearest. I've made up my mind to resign from the club. Married men ought not to carry its burdens. I'm going to turn over a new leaf and be with you more, and—Mary—I'm sorry."

"Don't say another word, John."

Two arms were around his neck, a soft cheek was laid against his. Mary forgave him on the spot. He did not tell her what he had overheard, and Aunt Phebe and Lucy Anne kept their own counsel. But John's resolution was not broken. And Mary did not have nervous prostration, and does not now seem in the slightest need of going to a sanatorium.

A LIFE'S HARVEST

"DO you turn me out of the house, Uncle Aaron? Can't I live here any longer? Where shall I go?"

The speaker was a pale-faced but sturdy looking lad of thirteen, with arms too long for the sleeves of his thin jacket, and neither shoes not stockings on his feet, though the fall day was nippingly cold.

"I don't care where you go, to destruction if you like, so's you don't bother me any more with your high-falutin', aristocratic, good-for-nothing-under-the-canopy airs. Clear out of my sight, and out o' the house, and never dare to show yourself here again, you, with your 'can't cut wood on Sunday, Uncle Aaron,' and your 'please let me go to school this winter, Uncle Aaron!' I've had ye round long as I'm going to stand you, so get up and git!" On the last word, the angry man, who had wrought himself up to a fury, put a deadly emphasis.

"Father!"

The word fell with timid pleading from a little crippled girl seated in a baby's high chair in the corner of the room. A woman stirring mush in an iron pot over the fire, which was of wood on an open hearth, motioned to the child to be still, but not before her father had uttered a savage "Shut up there, Dolly! I'll not have you pleading for beggar's brats. Jack's had his chance, and he's lost it. The poorhouse is good enough for him. It'll bring him to his senses."

Jack Wait stayed to hear no more. His Uncle Aaron was his nearest living relative, his dead father's only brother, and that father had been a gentle, scholarly man, a preacher of the Gospel, who had died in harness, leaving his boy a

charge on the closest-fisted, hardest-hearted farmer in all the country-side.

Three years of blows, neglect and continual abuse on the part of Uncle Aaron, and of nagging and fault-finding from Aunt Keturah, had not inclined Jack to love either of them. But he did dearly love little lame Dolly, whose blue eyes were blurred with tears, as she reached out her mite of a hand to bid him good-bye. Dolly had been the one sunbeam in his hard lot.

"Good-bye, Dolly!" The boy drew up his slender figure, and set the sturdy square jaw. "When I am a rich man, I'll come back in my carriage to see you!"

Uncle Aaron sneered.

"A pretty prospect of that, young man." And he shut the door after his nephew's retreating form, then left the room he had been sitting in, and went to the barn, unable, harsh as he was by nature and practice, to endure the sight of Dolly's anguish-stricken face.

"Don't cry, Dolly," said the mother, "I'm going to make fried cakes for supper, and I'll fry you a man, with raisins and currants in the dough. You'll like that."

"I'll never care for a fried man again," sobbed Dolly. "It's awful mean for you and father to treat my Jack so. But God'll take care of Jack. 'When my father and my mother forsake me then the Lord'll take me up!'" And Dolly stopped crying, and looked out of the window, down the road, already white with the flakes of the first snow which were falling fast.

It would have been strange indeed had Aaron Wait and his wife felt easy in their minds, when they reflected on what they had done to the ill clad and lonely little fellow whom Providence had cast on their care. Turning him adrift with his small bundle, they knew they had done a dastardly deed, and by bedtime, both hoped he would find his way back. But days and nights passed, and the boy was not heard from. The great white world of the snow

had swallowed him up. Neighbors asked what had become of Jack, and, to save their own credit, the Waits gave false answers, and Dolly made no sign, only prayed for him more earnestly than ever, as she crept to her bed at dusk, or sat in her little chair with her book or her knitting, the livelong day.

So the years slipped by, in woven links of days and weeks.

. . . . . .

When the lad turned his back on the only home he had on earth, it is idle to say that he felt depressed and discouraged. He did not know to whom to turn. His only plain thought was that he would die before he would go to the poorhouse. In his pocket he had a silver dollar, and a lady's visiting card, a dainty engraved card, with the name in elegant script, of a young woman who had spent the summer in the mountains and to whom he had acted as guide when she went after pond lilies and climbed the hills for golden-rod. He had rowed her in a boat, he had saddled her pony, and she had taken an interest in the boy, and told him if ever he could make his way to the distant city where she lived, he would find a friend in her. "Miss Lilla," he said, over and over, "Miss Lilla." But one dollar would not carry him far on the road to her. Nevertheless, Jack Wait pluckily resolved to take the first step. He bought a ticket at the station, to which he trudged before the snow quite obliterated paths, for the point to which his money would entitle him to ride, and then he took a seat in a car, and cold and tired as he was, fell asleep. As he slept, the little slip of pasteboard, which he had held in his hand, fell to the floor, and was picked up by the father of the girl whose name it bore. So our chances make God's opportunities.

"One of Lilla's waifs, I fancy!" the gentleman said, surveying with amused scrutiny the boy, whose relaxed features, ragged clothing, and bare feet, told a pitiful story of poverty and desolation.

But Mr. Munroe would hardly have kept the boy in mind as he did, had not something happened which made the two companions in misfortune and dependent on one another.

The train swept around a curve in the darkness. There was a misplaced switch. Crash, whirl, jar, shrieks, groans! The flash of lanterns, the lifting of the dying and the cold snow on the wan countenances of the dead! Mr. Munroe found himself badly shaken and with an injured wrist. The little fellow who had Lilla's visiting card was close beside him, happily unhurt.

With the quick instinct of helpfulness Jack gathered up the gentleman's wraps and his small travelling bag, and said "Lean on me, sir, till the doctors come this way," for in the twinkling of an eye, several doctors were on the spot, some from a village a few hundred yards off, and one or two who had been passengers on the wrecked train.

"Lean on you, midget!" said tall Mr. Munroe. "I will that, but tell me, how you come to know my daughter Lilla. Ouch! but I can't talk, laddie; my wrist hurts like fire."

Mr. Munroe took Jack Wait home with him, fitted him out comfortably, and set him to work in his warehouse. Lilla taught him evenings, and presently, discovering his aptitude and desire to learn, persuaded her father to let him go to school regularly. He was warmly clothed, well fed, well housed, and grew accustomed to the warmth and peace of a real Christian home. Step by step, he worked his way, when school days were over, to a place of influence; there was nothing too hard for Jack to attempt, and in all that he did he was honest, diligent and thorough. Not in one year nor in ten, did he achieve wealth, but there came a day, when the word of the Lord which says, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," was fulfilled in Jack Wait's case.

I drove past the great mansion where he lives now, one day last summer. There were green lawns bordered by scarlet geraniums, and watered by fountains, there were beds of flowers in bloom, and on the veranda children played. A carriage stood by the door, to which were harnessed a pair of cream-white horses with black manes and tails. Down the broad steps came a stalwart, fine-looking man, whose brown hair was just sprinkled with gray, and in his arms he carried a little figure pinched and pale and distorted with pain, but withal the figure of a sweet and loving woman, his cousin Dolly. Both her parents were dead, but Jack in his carriage had gone after and brought Dolly to his home, requiting the evil of his uncle and aunt with good, full measure, pressed down and running over. Jack's wife and children loved Dolly, and were very kind to her, and so was his adopted sister, Miss Lilla Munroe, whose whole life is a benefaction. It has grown up a harvest of blessing, the seed time that was so scanty and bitter, for God, the orphan's friend, watched over and defended the one who had no helper save the Father in Heaven.

THE NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR

THE house next door had been untenanted ever since Jessica could remember. It was a white house with green blinds, and long galleries running around two stories. Great trees stood closely about it like sentinels. Jessica had a fancy that the trees felt sorry for the lonesome house, and took special care of it on windy nights when its loose shutters banged to and fro, and made an eerie sound.

"Oh! mother, come here!" cried Jessica, one stormy evening, as she stood by her window, taking a last look at the world of outdoors, before she went to bed. "Oh! mother, see; there is somebody in the house next door!"

"Impossible, daughter," answered Mrs. Donaldson. Nevertheless, she came to the window. Then it was her turn to be surprised.

Sure enough, there were lights moving about in the front chamber upstairs, and presently the watchers made out the figure of a man in what looked like a long dressing-gown, standing opposite them and gazing steadily at some thing or somebody, whom they could not see.

"Strange!" said Mrs. Donaldson; "but I'm glad. It's been so desolate over there since Miss Jenny died. She died the year you were born, Jessica, and her people shut the house and went away. None of them have ever been back since. I had an idea they would never come home."

Jessica went to bed, but it was not to go to sleep at once. She was a dreamy little creature, fond of weaving fancies. Her head was full of exciting thoughts and it was long before she lost consciousness. When she did fall asleep, she had a very queer dream.

She was rapping softly, in the dead of night, at the

outer door of the next house. She was in her white night-gown, but somebody had slipped her warm, fleecy, pink kimona over that, and her feet were in her lamb's wool slippers, so she did not feel cold. As she knocked, the door was opened by a tall gentleman, with a silver lamp in his hand. He had dark eyes, that glowed like flame, and a white beard, falling low on his breast.

"Why, Jenny!" he exclaimed. "My own, wee Jenny. Come right in, ladybird. They told me you were never coming home, but I knew better. I knew it was a mistake. I've come three thousand miles to find you, little Jenny. Come right in."

Jessica did not stop to explain that her name was not Jane; she stepped inside the hall, and followed her guide up the stairs into a room, where there was a bright fire blazing on the hearth. A table was spread for supper. There were rolls and honey and fruit. "Jenny," said the gentleman, "you must be hungry; help yourself, child." So Jenny in the dream did as she was told, and ate a peach, which had a most delicious flavor. The man ate, too; then sat down in a big chair, forgot about his guest, and was directly fast asleep.

Jessica stole away, so she thought in her dream, and was immediately back in her own room, and in her own bed.

"Jessica, dear child!" said her mother, the next morning, "how came you to be so careless? You have stains of peach juice on your new kimona, and your new bedroom slippers are as damp as if you had been trailing about in the wet grass."

"Then it was not a dream," exclaimed Jessica, sitting up very straight and opening her eyes very wide. "I must have really gone into the house next door, as I dreamed I did. Mother, there is such a dear old gentleman there, and he called me Jenny! I did eat a peach there, really. I thought it was merely a dream. Oh, what fun!"

But her father and mother did not think it fun to have

a child who walked in her sleep, and they moved Jessica's bed into their own room, and took every precaution against the repetition of her escapade. They said little about it, but one result of the affair was that they took Jessica out of school, and gave her many hours of happy, romping play in the garden, and many rides on her pony's back in the days that followed.

The mysterious personage next door was seldom visible by daylight. Muffled up in a long cloak, he often walked forth in the dusk, and soon the village grew familiar with his appearance on the street. He bought bread at the baker's and milk at the grocer's, but encouraged no conversation, and did not so much as take the trouble to answer when spoken to. Often he stood in his door, peering out and seemingly looking for somebody, and once, when Jessica was playing in the road, he called out pleadingly, "Jenny, Jenny; come, child! Grandpapa's waiting for you, dearie."

Jessica's mother did not like to have Jessica go to him, and would not permit her to do more than step up to the threshold of the house and return immediately.

"You need not be afraid of the old captain," said Jessica's father. "Old Fido knows him, and isn't afraid. The man whom a dog trusts may be trusted with a child."

"I had not thought of that," said the mother. "Fido doesn't make friends with everyone, that is true."

Weeks passed, and the next-door neighbor had gradually established his footing with the Donaldsons, and had grown quite friendly. Mr. Donaldson remembered him as Captain Sage, grandfather of the little Miss Jenny, whose death had so overwhelmed an entire family, that it had driven them from their home and scattered them in far-away lands. Captain Sage had always been, "a little off," owing to a sunstroke during the Civil War, in a hot campaign under a fiercely beating Southern sun; the loss of his favorite granddaughter had disturbed his mental equilibrium. But

he was very harmless and kind, and it was a great comfort to him to mix up Jessica with Jenny. He evidently could not disentangle the two. And he gave a whole heart full of love to the little golden-haired new claimant upon his affection.

One morning, Jessica, who had gone to sleep nine years old, woke up ten. She had a birthday. Her parents gave her lovely things on her birthday. And she had a party, and invited old Captain Sage. He said he would come with pleasure, after the other playmates left, but he did not wish to be seen till they had said good-night.

So, last of all, in walked the captain. He brought Jessica a very beautiful present, one that any little girl would have been delighted to have. It was a rosewood desk with a golden key, and the inside was smooth as satin, and ornamented with mother-of-pearl. The desk had curious old-fashioned note paper, a great store of it, all trimmed with lace. There was a stick of pale pink sealing wax, a tiny box of matches, and a stamp with the letter J. Jessica had fallen heir to Jennie's writing desk.

"I am sending her a trunk full of Jennie's things," he said, and the next hour it was brought in by two men. The trunk contained the most beautiful dresses any little girl could wish for, and besides, a doll and an outfit, which made ten-year-old Jessica laugh and cry.

"I am going away," said the old captain. "I am never coming back. Tomorrow, I shall be on the sea. I hear it calling me. I want this dear sweet child to have everything that belonged to my Jenny. I've got it straight now. Jenny and her dear ones are all safe in port, and the old mariner will soon be there, too. So good-bye, everybody. Good-bye, little maiden fair."

But it was no earthly ocean wave that called old Captain Sage. When another day dawned, he had drifted safe into port himself, and was in the land immortal with the sweet little Jenny, of whom Jessica had so often reminded him.

A CHRISTMAS PIE

MISS KATHERINE WAINWRIGHT lived by herself in a large house at one end of a broad, village street. At the other end, after one passed a vacant lot, overgrown with grass in summer and drifted deep with snow in winter, there was a paper mill, and not far from it were a number of small cottages, occupied by the workmen and their families. Around the corner from the mill might be seen a new two-story building, that was the pride of Miss Wainwright's heart. She had become interested in what is known as welfare work, and she had sent for plans, and finally engaged an architect to devise others, so that she might have the most approved and beautiful edifice that her means would permit her to erect for the comfort and improvement of the factory people. When the building had been finished, it included a rest-room, and assembly-room, and a room in which nutritious food might be served at reasonable prices. There was also a reading-room, well stocked with newspapers and magazines. All this was intended for the good of the operatives. Miss Wainwright invited a group of her fashionable friends, and they came, and praised the building and its owner, before it was thrown open to the public. She, then, having liberally spent her money that this model of comfort and convenience might be given to her working people, went further, and sent for a young lady accustomed to Settlement work, and installed her as general superintendent. There being no place in the village where the worker, whose name was Janet Lewis, could live, Miss Wainwright took her into her own home, and presently found her own welfare much enhanced by the young girl's pleasant company, gaiety of

spirits and good common sense. For at least ten years, she had known nothing of such companionship, except as she invited guests to tarry with her for a while. Her servants had been with her for years, and were devoted to her interests. One and all they liked Miss Janet, and adopted her into their affection.

In passing, it may be stated that the paper mill had belonged to Miss Wainwright's father, and that she had inherited three-fourths of its stock. Her brother, who owned the remaining fourth, had large wealth in other directions, and spent most of his time abroad. When Katherine wrote to him about her new project he replied that she was at liberty to amuse herself as she liked; but that unless Tilset folk had materially changed since his day, she would find her efforts to help them regarded as intrusive, and he prophesied that, in time, she would be glad to sell her new building to the Town Council for a district school or something of that sort.

One evening, when Janet returned from the Hall, by which name the new building was known, Miss Wainwright looked up with a laugh from some papers she was assorting, and said, "I want you to hear this letter of my brother Dean, before I destroy it. He was skeptical about my enterprise, and almost made fun of it. I wish he could come home and see it for himself."

"But, dear Miss Wainwright," was Janet's answer, when she had heard the letter, "we have to acknowledge that thus far things are not going very well. Indeed, I begin to feel that I, at least, am a failure, and that I am not earning my salary. I think that you will have to try somebody else. The building is there; it is perfect in every appointment; it is warm, it is light, it is cheery. The piano is good, and the new books are enchanting; but not a soul appreciates any of it. This is the third night that I have spent alone in the reading-room. I have visited every family among the mill people, and the mothers are all as nice and polite as they can be. They say, however, and it is

true, that they have dinner in the middle of the day for their daughters, and there is no need of a lunch room. In the evening they prefer to stay at home. The boys court the girls just as they always have. They call your Hall, Miss Wainwright's toy, and the whole beautiful dream is just a great big disappointment. A welfare worker in this place is out of place, and I ought to have told you so before this, but I hadn't the courage."

Janet broke down and began to cry. Miss Wainwright sat looking at her as if she had been turned to stone. Presently, she melted, put both arms around the girl, and said, "Never mind, dear. I'm not going to have tears over my folly. If I can't do good in the way I want to, I shall show my friends that they may try something on their own account. Christmas is coming, and as surely as my name is Katherine Wainwright, I shall gather those mothers and daughters and the little children, and the fathers, too, and have them all enjoy a Christmas Eve frolic in my Hall. 'Toy,' indeed, I'll show them!

"In the meantime, there is no particular use in burning gas in the evening, when nobody comes. So we'll close the rooms before dark, and you and I will spend our evenings together, here. My child, whether you believe it or not, you cannot better earn your salary than by making a woman like me feel twenty years younger than she has, since she was really young."

Janet demurred, but at last consented. Later the two ladies took pains to make a list of the children in the cottages, from the babies upward. Miss Wainwright sent to town, and bought a large number of dolls of all sizes. Other mysterious boxes kept on arriving, filled with gifts for young and old. The gifts were useful and ornamental, both, and included an immense variety of playthings. In the six weeks before Christmas, Miss Wainwright and Miss Janet did a good deal of friendly visiting. They dropped casually into Tim Morgan's house, and sat beside

his bed-ridden mother, telling her stories and drawing out her recollections of the time when Katherine Wainwright had been a little roly-poly child, who often came to the mill in the morning with her father, the old squire. They complimented Mrs. Macmanus on the beauty of her freckle-faced twins, and Miss Wainwright won the mother's heart by taking both the sturdy little rogues into her silken lap, a thing she would never have dreamed of doing if she had not seen how Janet kissed and hugged the small people, and how they ran after her with gleeful shouts whenever she came near. For old John Dix, Miss Wainwright procured a stock of the tobacco he best loved, and although she did not approve of smoking in general, she told him that she thought a man who had passed his eighty-fifth year, had reached a period when he might smoke if he liked, without younger people finding fault. In short, Miss Wainwright, assisted by Janet Lewis, laid siege against her people in a sweet, neighborly way, that had never occurred to her when she was simply the great lady of the neighborhood.

When Christmas came, the two ladies were ready for it. The Hall, that had been as dark as a pocket for weeks, was lighted up, and personally, every family had been asked to come there on Christmas Eve. There was a tree in which twinkled dozens of starry papers. The branches were strung with iridescent balls, and wreaths of paper roses garlanded the room. Packages addressed to every man, woman and child were clustered, heaped and piled around the base of the tree. Miss Janet had sent to town for a half dozen of her friends, who could play and sing well, and there was plenty of jovial music, ending, at last, before they separated, with that exquisite Christmas song:

It came upon the midnight clear
That glorious song of old;
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold.

"Peace to the earth, good will to man,
From heaven's all-gracious King:"
The earth in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

After singing this, they exchanged affectionate good-nights, and went home. The streets were white with snow, and the stars in the sky shone with such a radiance as must have been over Bethlehem ages ago, when the great glowing star led the Wise Men from the East to the stable where lay the Child and the mother.

Early on Christmas morning, Miss Wainwright and Miss Janet were up, and the house party, consisting of Janet's friends, were early in the breakfast room. Every one in the house, including the old servants, had hung up a stocking beside the chimney, and there was great fun when the contents of these were distributed. The ideal Christmas giving is reached, when each finds the very gift that he or she wanted, and never told the want. They had finished breakfast, and were still in the midst of their Christmas gaiety, when there came a loud peal of the door bell, and glancing out, Janet exclaimed, "Oh, Miss Wainwright! Hurry! Look at the procession."

A remarkable procession it was, a long procession of men, women and children. In front, marched twenty small boys, beating drums and blowing tin horns. Back of them were little girls, who kept step gaily to the music. Borne on a large tray, carried by two stalwart men, was a huge basin, containing a pie with a pyramidal crust, from the apex of which floated a miniature flag. The people in the procession were brimming over with delight, and they began to shout "Merry Christmas" altogether, as they came up the winding driveway and approached the house. Janet flew down to open wide the doors, and in they trooped, a motley company of happy looking friends, who extended rough hands in cordial greeting to the lady of the house. She stood among them a gracious figure, in

her simple morning gown, the sunlight falling through the great window on her silver hair. Presently, Elsie Macmanus stepped out of the circle and make a little speech. She said: "We have all had presents from you, dear Miss Wainwright, and so we made up our minds that we would not leave you out in the cold; we thought of it a month ago, and we have all combined to bring you a present that we hope you will like." Turning, the child waved her hand to her father, who, at this signal, deftly uncovered the pie. There was revealed a shining, silver-plated loving-cup, on which was inscribed "K. W., from her friends."

Miss Wainwright had to brush away a mist that blurred her eyes, before she could properly thank her neighbors for their Christmas gift. She asked them into the dining-room, where hot coffee and cakes were presently served to everyone, and when they had finished their repast, Janet's slender fingers struck a chord on the piano, and directly the house rang with the stirring melody of an old Christmas carol.

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay:
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

As the last notes died away, everyone was conscious of a new sensation. Standing in the doorway was a gentleman, who had entered the house unobserved during the singing. He was tall and fair, with a sunny smile and a look of genial good will that at once drew to him the hearts of those he met. From one to another the words ran swiftly, "Why, here is Mr. Dean," and the older people exclaimed, "How he reminds us of the squire." Katherine Wainwright ran across the room like a girl, and the stranger's arms were around her in a brotherly embrace. Dean Wainwright had returned, as was his fashion now and then, to give his sister a surprise, and he had opportunely arrived on Christmas morning.

As a rule, Mr. Wainwright's visits were flying ones; but this year he lingered long and seemed reluctant to go back to his beloved Paris. When, at last, he went, it was with a promise from a certain little maid, that, before another Christmas, he might cross the sea again to come for a bride.

Miss Katherine Wainwright has builded better than she knew when she brought Janet Lewis into her home. She had found a wife for her brother and a sister for herself. As for the Hall, it became the rallying place for social diversion among the factory people, and in the evening, youths and maidens often met there, having discovered that it was a better background for courtship than their homes afforded. Classes, too, were organized, where girls and boys studied, and mothers learned the new frills in cooking and sewing, sometimes adopting them and sometimes regarding the teaching with scorn. Yet, on the whole, Miss Wainwright's scheme was a means of constant good to the people of the mill, and the friendly spirit embodied in the Christmas loving-cup never again took flight from the village of Tilset.

DOROTHY'S TEST

DOROTHY MILLER held very strong opinions on the subject of temperance; indeed, some of her acquaintances thought her a fanatic, and criticised her severely for the stand she took upon the safe ground of total abstinence. A beautiful girl was Dorothy, dark-eyed and oval-tinted, with a firm, sweet mouth, and the graceful shape and lovely curves of a youthful Hebe. A girl one's eyes loved to rest upon, and one's ears to listen to.

She came from her country home when she was just twenty, to spend a year at her Aunt Carolyn's in town, and study art at the Students' Union. No idler was our village maiden. Accustomed to hard work and early rising, she was up in good season every day, and the moment breakfast and prayers were over, Dorothy was off, blithe as the morning, for a long session in the hall, where a class of earnest workers were studying the antique, under the care of one of the best masters of the period.

Before long, Dorothy's rare charm and quick wit made her very popular among her fellow students, and many weeks had not gone by, when she discovered that her own thoughts turned as naturally as flowers to the sun, towards one of her new friends, Hamilton Warwick, a tall, slender youth, with the carriage of an athlete, the head of an Apollo, and the golden hair and blue eyes that are the heritage of the Norseman.

Hamilton Warwick was a Nova Scotian, of Danish lineage, on his mother's side. The days of the years of a man's life are swift and beautiful when, as the poet says, "his fancies lightly turn to thoughts of love," and Dorothy Miller was a prize worth seeking. She held herself aloof as maidens should, and for a long time her cool stateliness held Hamilton back, the while it made him more than ever

resolved to win her. He was well known to Aunt Carolyn, whose friend his father had been, and she favored his suit. The weeks as they passed revealed to him constantly some new enchantment in Dorothy's character and disposition. For her part, she experienced a pride and joy in the character of him who had taken possession of her soul, and when, one evening, the young man called, and, after an interview with her aunt, formally proposed for her hand, Dorothy gave him no shy reluctant yes, but a gracious and womanly consent, which sent him home to his boarding house, walking on air.

Yet there was one point in which these two did not agree, and where they could not mate.

In the delightful intimacy of an engaged couple, there was for some time no "little rift within the lute, that by and by should make the music mute." But one summer evening, Hamilton said lightly:

"Our class is to have its annual dinner next Thursday. There'll be great good luck if a man of us goes home sober."

Dorothy's shocked face looking into his, should have warned him; but quite oblivious of any danger signal in her flushed cheek, or steadfast eyes, the young man proceeded recklessly to his fate:

"It's the only time in the year that I ever indulge, pardon me, my darling, in such conviviality, and as when I am a grave, married man, I'll have to give all such doings up, I'm going in for a good time with the fellows next week. Don't expect to see me next day at the Union, dearest, nor the day after, either! I'll turn up later all right, though."

"Are you in earnest, Hamilton? Because, if you are joking, the jest is in very poor taste. You surely never drink a social glass?"

"Why should I not be in earnest, Dora? I am in dead earnest. Do you suppose me such a muff that I am afraid to drink a glass of wine? A man with no will of his

own? I know when to indulge, and I hope I know when to leave off, Dorothy. Of course I don't expect to drink to excess; that part was fun, but I shall certainly drink wine at the class dinner; I always have done so, and I won't be singular."

The glow faded from Dorothy's cheek, and her face grew somber; so have I seen the light fade in the radiant sky, when over the sun floated an ominous thunder cloud, with silvery lightnings hidden in its stormy breast.

"My friend," she said in a low voice, but with clear, incisive accents, "I am glad this conversation has taken place here and now. Whatever you may think of me, Hamilton, I must tell you the truth: I will never marry a man who even moderately or occasionally drinks any sort of liquor. My convictions are unalterable, and I have been mistaken in you. The choice will have to be between social drinking and your bride, for, even at the altar, and before the minister, I would repudiate a man in whose temperance principles I had not full faith. You must choose, Hamilton!"

"The choice is apparently forced on me," said Hamilton, coldly, a demon of obstinacy awakened in him by her tone and manner. He went on icily hard: "Dearly and tenderly as I love you, Dorothy, I cannot submit to dictation of this sort. You have never shown this kind of temper before; it seems unlike you; may I be forgiven, if I say, it is unworthy of you, to be so narrow, and to make so much of a trifle. I cannot yield to the caprice of a moment when you are excited and stirred up. Think it over calmly, dearest. You have told me that you wanted a husband who could rule you, but you are setting out to rule me with a vengeance."

"Fortunately," said Dorothy, rising with a still, grave dignity, which well became her, "we are not yet irrevocably bound. You are not my husband, Mr. Warwick, nor am I your wife, and this discussion may as well end now. I return your ring, and I beg you to forget that we have ever been friends. Good-bye."

Dorothy swept from the room, leaving Hamilton planted in the middle of the floor, the ring which she had given him held stupidly in his hand.

He was raging with anger and wounded vanity. In a moment he had seized his hat, the hall door banged as he passed through it, and he tore down the street at a pace which made passers-by turn and look at him.

"So!" he exclaimed, "this is the girl I have set my hopes on; one who will throw me over for a quibble. One who cares more for herself and her own silly prejudices than for a man's love and life. It is not as if I were a drunkard or likely to be one!"

The whole thing had happened in such a flurry of haste, that neither Dorothy nor Hamilton quite comprehended it. Both were "set," and one was wrong. One was absolutely and entirely right, as right as God's truth, and her house was builded on the everlasting rock of justice. But it almost broke her heart to abide there.

Away back in Dorothy's memory lived a picture, branded there forever, as by a redhot iron.

It was of her father, idolized by his wife, her own devoted mother, who had mourned for him through Dorothy's childhood; this father brought home dead from the ford in which he had fallen from his horse, after a convivial supper one dark night. Drowned because of a social glass! Dorothy could never forget that, nor ever tolerate the possibility of her life's touching anywhere with one who was open to the temptations which had wrecked her mother's peace and happiness.

A girl who loves does not at once put love aside and the broken engagement wore upon Dorothy Miller, the more so that her Aunt Carolyn disapproved of her haste in the affair, and found great fault with her for lack of tact.

"A man should be managed, my love," she said, "won over, not knocked down with a club. One cannot order

a man," she went on. But Dorothy held high her queenly little head.

"Aunty," she exclaimed, "the case is like the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, 'Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.' Hamilton has not stood my test. He has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. It is safe not to marry a man who tampers with drink. I cannot love any one who jests about a subject which makes more misery than any other thing on the globe, which makes widows and orphans, and builds great fortunes with ruined souls as their foundation."

"Dorothy," said her aunt, testily, "you should join the Salvation Army. There is your place."

"Perhaps it is," answered Dorothy, gravely. "Just now, painting pictures appears to be the Lord's appointment for me, however."

Let a friend of both parties finish the story.

"Last week," she said, "I saw Hamilton Warwick walking with his young wife, a gentle little creature, who clung to his arm and looked proudly up into his face. He soon forgot Dorothy Miller you see. As they passed me, Judge V., who joined me on the promenade, shook his head and remarked:

" 'I tremble for those young people. Warwick's a fine fellow in some ways, but the drink habit is gaining on him fast; it is so insidious, a man's will is enfeebled before he dreams of peril. And he comes, poor boy, of a hard-drinking, roistering line.'

"A little later," said the friend, "I met Dorothy. She had on the garb of the Salvation lasses; in her hand she led a little child; her eyes shone, her step was free, her look was of strength, and independence. She has given up her painting, but her pictures are sold at a good price, and it is only that she feels that she must, in a more exclusive way, be about her Father's business. God bless Dorothy!"

THE ALBUM QUILT

I WAS paying a visit in a remote country village; remote I mean from the railroad, which was nearly thirty miles distant from the parish where Leonie's husband lived the life of a hard working physician. On foot, or in conveyances, or mounted on horseback, people went from place to place in that primitive region, and life was much simpler there than in the great cities. Somehow people had fewer wants, and those they had were easily gratified, and the social rallying point very naturally was the church. Never having been in precisely such a community, everything was new and entertaining to me, and the very thing my hostess feared, that I would miss accustomed luxuries, made the experience more delightful than it otherwise would have been.

In my very comfortable, but plainly furnished chamber, there was one article which afforded me never failing enjoyment. It was what is called an album quilt. In this sort of a quilt, composed of many pieces of patchwork sewed together, there is in the center of every patch a little oblong bit of white, on which a name and date, and sometimes a sentiment or text are written in indelible ink.

"Leonie," I said, one day, "that is a curious quilt of yours; how did you come by it?"

"Well," she replied, "that quilt has a history. It does not really belong to me; it was presented to Dr. Leale by a set of friends of his among the mountains, and it has a story attached."

"I knew it," I said, clapping my hands. "Now tell me the story."

"Soon after our marriage," said Leonie, "Dr. Leale was sent for one spring morning to attend a patient in a critical condition up on the Crest, as that hamlet perched among the hills above us is called. I hated to have him go, for there had been heavy rains, and the streams were rising. The river there," pointing to a turbid and dark flowing sheet not far away, "was foaming and angry, and I, a city girl, and a stranger, shivered at the thought of the danger before my dear husband. It was useless to remonstrate, for when doctor sees duty before him, he sets his face like a flint, and that iron will of his brooks no opposition."

"'Good-bye, Leonie, my wife, my darling,' he said, straining me to his breast in a passionate embrace, 'Good-bye. God is with us both. I hope to be back tomorrow, but if I am not, keep up a brave heart, and trust the Lord, whose orders I am carrying out.'

"Margerie," she added, "this solemn parting was not of a kind to keep up my spirits, and you may imagine what I went through in the ten days that elapsed before my good man came back. He reached the Crest, performed the operation he went to carry through, and then simply had to stay there, a prisoner, till the floods abated. Providentially for him, there was a good deal of severe illness among the mountaineers at the time, and so my husband was busy, which made it easier for him to bear the waiting and to endure the suspense he knew was my portion.

"After his return, and when everything had settled into ordinary ways, when, indeed, we had ceased to refer to the great flood, we were one evening surprised by a visit from our friends of the Crest.

"If you ever meet these good people, you will find them very kind and true-hearted, but wonderfully silent and undemonstrative. They have not much money, and it is not often they combine in a gift or testimonial, and so that is why I prize so highly the album quilt bestowed on Doctor Archie McAlister Leale.

"They presented it," my hostess went on, "in the funniest way. Two wagon loads came, and several friends on horseback. I flew around to get them supper. We always have plenty of ham and bacon; coffee and biscuits are easily made; I had a good stock of preserves, and a lot of fruit cake in the pantry and some of the women helped me, so supper was ready in a twinkling. Doctor looked at me and I at doctor, for we didn't quite know what to make of it, but we asked the oldest guest to say grace, and he did so, in a beautiful, hearty fashion, and then they ate, and were quite chatty and sociable.

"When supper was over, Uncle Jerry Vine rose and very gravely rapped on the table for order.

" 'Doctor Leale and Mrs. Doctor Leale,' he said, 'we friends from the Crest didn't happen in; we came o' purpose to give you a present, and here it is. It was made for the doctor, and belongs to the doctor, but seeing husband and wife are one, I have decided to put it in her hands, and not into his.' "

"It was the album quilt?"

"Yes, the album quilt. The pieces patched by those women from bits of their wedding gowns, and their babies' dresses, and little scraps saved here and saved there, and in every patch was a name of somebody the doctor had been good to, or somebody who loved the doctor, and a favorite text. Come, let's study it out, Margie."

The little history fresh in my hearing, I looked with a tender respect on those carefully stitched bits of calico. Here are some of the texts:

"And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Alice Ainsworth, 18—.

"By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew." Mary Anne Watts, 18—.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall direct thy steps." Martha McGilvary, 18—.

"Discretion shall preserve thee." Susan Packard, 18—.

So it went straight through the alphabet. The verses were not always particularly appropriate; they seemed to have been picked out at random, but oh! the good will, the kind gratitude expressed in that quaint way. Leonie said, and I did not wonder, that she should hand the quilt down to her children.

"Before they left, that moonlight night," said Leonie, "our friends from the Crest had family prayers with us. They stood, a reverent-looking band of men and women, and sang in clear, strong tones that beautiful hymn:

How firm a foundation,
Ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith
In his excellent Word.

Then, Uncle Jerry prayed, a prayer for the doctor, for me, for the community, which I never heard surpassed, it was so close, so pleading, so intimate. I have never since been afraid, no matter how lonesome it has been, or how rough the people, or how long or late the good doctor has to stay, when off on his rounds in this new country. I know he is safe and I am safe, for we are compassed round about with prayer."

THE TRIBE OF REUBEN

THE tribe of Reuben lived in a straggling and uncomfortable fashion over on Dead Man's Flats. These low-lying stretches of swamp land were the pregnant nests of fever and malaria; diphtheritic and typhoidal germs were incubated there, and on their edge a few wretched cabins clung hesitatingly, with sometimes a pigpen abutting them, and sometimes a henroost, though the dwellers on Dead Man's Flats were famous rather for stealing poultry and anything else they could lay their hands on, than for honest thrift or care of any property belonging to them. Children swarmed in these cabins, some puny and starved-looking, others sturdy and strong, notwithstanding their miserable environment; pallid women with their hair done up in severe knots and their skirts kilted above slipshod feet, shuffled about doing their work, what there was of it, and men in shirt-sleeves with short pipes puffing vile tobacco, sat in the doorways and drowsed, or stood about and swore.

Near by, comparatively, on a rise of ground, stood a paper-mill, in which most of the men and boys, and the younger girls of the D. M. Flats, as they were called for shortness, earned such livings as they could. The livings would have been better had there been no gin-shops or "hotels" in the borough, and some of the poor bits of homes would have been brighter, if father had let beer alone.

On a higher level than the paper-mill stretched a fertile plain, where pleasant homes stood amid blooming flower patches, and away beyond this again were rounding hills and dimpling valleys, dotted with farms and twinkling at night with starry lamp-light from many bright windows.

In a household where both money and love were plenty, a household rich, therefore, and exceedingly blessed, a conference was being held one sultry morning over another and different household on Dead Man's Flats.

"I am tired of being pillaged in this way," said Judge Rainsforth, with great sternness. "Here are my Leghorns stolen again; our chickens and eggs are carried off under our very eyes, and the thief can belong only to that abominable, good-for-nothing tribe of Reuben. I shall set detectives on their track at once, and the first one that is caught shall go to jail, I promise you. Now, don't plead for them, Mary," addressing his wife, "I am out of patience with this weak condoning of crime. The family of Reuben Shreves are a disgrace to the community."

"The existence of such a hole as Dead Man's Flats is a disgrace to the community," said the wife, "but while it is there, we much expect to suffer from such prowlers as the Shreves tribe. I cannot imagine, John, why you accuse me of weakness. You are the soft-hearted member of this concern. I would gladly send all the little Shreves to an institution, put the father and mother in the penitentiary, and send the old grandmother to an almshouse for the rest of her life."

The Judge laughed. "Isn't that like a woman, now? Never anything half way with your sex. You're a queer lot, Mary. Meanwhile, I have lost my Leghorns, and I know the thief must be a person familiar with the premises and friendly with Rex, who is getting to be superannuated. I intend to invest in a spring-gun and a ferocious watchdog. This robbery shall have a stop put to it or my name's not John P. Rainsforth. Hello, Pet, what's the matter? What have you to propose, darling?"

Kate Rainsforth, generally known in the family as "Pet," had a petition to urge.

"Papa," she said, her silvery voice vibrating, her dark eyes shining, both little hands clasped on his arm, "Let

me try what I can do for those poor people. They need the Christian religion down there. They need a friend. Give me leave to try what I can do for the Shreves."

"Kate," the Judge answered gravely, "that family is not fit to tie your shoes. You are too good, too dainty, too pure to breathe such air as theirs. I don't like to deny you anything, but I cannot have you getting typhoid fever in Dead Man's Flats."

"I will use every precaution; I will be more than careful. I will do my very best to keep well. But, before any more of the Shreves are shut up in jail, do let some of us see what we can devise to awaken their self-respect."

Judge Rainsforth gave in, as he always did when Pet begged a favor. Her mother, who always did the same, contented herself with saying that Pet must wear camphor gum in the bosom of her frock, and take a bath immediately on her return from her expeditions, and she would interfere to put an end to the folly, the moment she saw any symptoms of danger in Pet's condition.

Pet kissed both parents, ran upstairs to her beautiful room, knelt down and said her prayers.

"I'm surprised, Papa Rainsforth," said the mother, "that you did not withhold your consent from Pet's preposterous request. You ought to have said 'No' at once. But you never have any backbone when it comes to a struggle with Pet."

"And I," said the husband, "am simply amazed, Mamma Rainsforth, that you cannot control your own only daughter. I looked at you, expecting you to shake your head, or make some sign, but you wore the expression of the sphinx. I don't believe in giving Pet her head, but what can I do, when she comes with that soft, sweet, coaxing way of hers? If she were a boy, she'd fare very differently, but a man must indulge his young daughter, as a matter of course. The government of this family depends on you, Mary Josephine, and you know it."

The Judge passed a caressing hand over his wife's brown hair, and kissed her smooth forehead. She blushed and laughed like a girl.

"We're a foolish pair, Jack," she answered, gazing fondly at the strong, fine face bent above her. "God grant our folly may not injure Pet."

"Pet is in God's hand," said the Judge. "She is right, too. Dead Man's Flats is a menace to everything good, and a hotbed for everything bad in this county, and somehow we ought to change its conditions. It's a big undertaking though, and Pet's little hands won't accomplish much. I tell you she's a brave girl to tackle that tribe of Reuben."

"I was afraid she'd ask to go and live in Rivington Street, New York, at the College Settlement, or at Hull House, in Chicago," said the mother, "and I'd rather keep my bonny maid at home with me for awhile. I'll watch over and help her, John, all I can and so I am sure you will—bless her heart!"

"Bless her heart and her mother's heart, to be sure I will," said the judge.

Meanwhile Pet was making her plans.

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The first time that Kate Rainsforth knocked at the door of Mrs. Shreves in the middle of a Monday morning, the door was shut in her face. She had chosen the wrong time for a visit. Mrs. Shreves was at the washtub. Her youngest baby was sprawling on the floor. Two older children were quarreling over bread and molasses. A boy of twelve was swinging on the gate, and on the post sat a girl of nine years, with untidy hair and a torn apron.

"Say, Missus," said the latter, "if you're after kids to go to Sunday school, this ain't your shop."

"I am not looking for kids to go to Sunday school," answered the young lady. "I am making friendly calls, and I will come again when your mother is not so busy."

She passed on, smiling back over her shoulder at the surprise in the faces by the gate. Lizzie and Tommy stared after her and at each other, open-mouthed.

"She's nice!" said Lizzie gravely. "Wot a pretty dress she's got on, and that sunshade, oh! it's sweet!"

Lizzie's mind had received an impression. So had Tom's. He suddenly jumped from the gate and ran helter skelter after the lady.

"Say!" he shouted. "Say, lady! Won't yer gimme some new clothes; these is the best I've got. I ain't got no better pants than these. I'd go to Sunday school if I had decent clothes."

Kate stopped and looked at him. She saw a dirty boy, with a rough mop of black hair, and a pair of great black eyes. It was a keen, intelligent face that returned her gaze without anything sly or covert.

Kate took a dainty card from her pocketbook. "I wouldn't insult you by giving you a new suit," she said, "but if you'll come to my house, and ask for me, I'll put you in the way of earning a fine suit. I'll let you work for me every morning, and you shall be well paid."

The boy's brow clouded. "I'd do it, and be glad to," he said, "but marm would take the money as fast as I earned it. I couldn't hide it from her, she'd get it when I was asleep, and if pop found it out, he'd take it and drink it up."

"You and I shall be partners," said the young lady holding out her hand. "The money you earn, I'll drop for you into a money pig in my room, or rather you shall drop it in yourself. When there is enough to pay for the clothes I'll go to the shop with you and we'll see about them together."

"Honest Injun?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"Honest Injun!" said the lady, solemnly.

It was a bargain. For the next fortnight Tommy Shreves spent several hours a day weeding flower borders

and running errands for Kate Rainsforth, always finding a good breakfast waiting for him.

He gradually improved in cleanliness. Stepping into Miss Rainsforth's room, with its shining hardwood floor, its soft rugs, its divan piled with cushions, its little tea-table set with fairy cups and saucers, and its pictures on the walls, the boy felt as a pariah might if invited into a palace.

In due time he earned his new suit, gray cloth with gilt buttons, and found shoes and a cap added, for extra work, Miss Kate said, and then he asked to go to Sunday school with her.

One by one, the family was taken captive. Tommy reported his mother one morning as "awful sick," and Kate, first eating her luncheon, sallied forth to investigate for herself. She was able to soothe the poor woman's pain, and to make her a reviving cup of tea, and this kindness proved the entering wedge. Friendly relations having been established, Miss Kate by degrees allowed her visits to have a certain regularity, and on Wednesday mornings the little Shreves were accustomed to watch for the tall, graceful figure swinging down the road at a great pace, and always stopping at their door. Everybody in Dead Man's Flats knew who this visitor was, and that she belonged in a special way to the Shreves. Once she came, a vision of delight, riding a roan pony, and dressed in a dark green habit, with a high hat on her tightly braided hair. She picked up the Shreve twins, first one and then the other, and gave them a ride down the road to the end of the settlement and back, after which nothing would do, but that all the small children clamored in turn to be taken up to the saddle, and finally when a dozen had been gratified, she alighted and let the older ones lifted to her seat by the somewhat sullen, but quite obedient English groom, have the pleasure of feeling a horse move under their weight.

Henceforth Kate Rainsforth was the queen of Dead

Man's Flats. She had taken the hearts of everybody captive. Thus far she had not said a directly religious word; she had simply lived religion before them. Perhaps her sitting down in Mrs. Shreves' kitchen and showing the woman how to mend her man's shirts and darn his stocking, doing part of the mending with her own fingers, was as truly pious an act as anything she might have offered in prayer or song.

There came a day when Kate Rainsforth, kneeling in the midst of a group, called on God audibly, from those forlorn flats. A lad had been hurt in the mill. He was brought home, the damp dews of death beading his forehead. The doctor, hastily summoned, declared there was nothing he could do, the hurt was fatal. Beside the dying boy, his mother and father bent, for once dumb with anguish. He was Tommy Shreves' friend and playmate, and Tommy flew for "the lady," with some dim notion that she could save Jim. She came; she bent over the couch with angelic pity. The face of the dying sought hers with imploring anxiety.

"Pray—for—me—lady," the whitening lips gasped, and Kate prayed.

"Dear Jesus," she cried, "thou art here; thou seest our sorrow. Take this dear boy home to heaven—forgive his sin. Nobody helped him to be good. He wants thy hand now to lead him over the river and up to the throne. Oh! dear Jesus, pitying Saviour, we all ask thy help in our bitter need. We ask, for Christ's sake," "Amen!" cried the people of Dead Man's Flats, and the passing soul of Jimmy Breck went to the land of the living.

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"Mary!"

"Well, John?"

Judge and Mrs. Rainsforth had listened to Pet, who had played Chopin's stormy music and Mendelssohn's liquid fire, till their souls were flooded with melody. The girl had just kissed them good-night.

"That daughter of ours is a very precious thing, my dear. She has brought the personal element to bear on the Shreves. Shreves, Senior, called on me today, and forced on me a five-dollar bill. He said it was conscience money, and I took it, for to have declined would have crushed back his awakening manhood; but that bill shall go into Pet's box, and be returned with interest to Dead Man's Flats."

"I wish the flats had a more cheerful name."

"They probably will have some day. I am told that the people want to call the place, 'Miss Kate's Gardens.'"

A STALLED CHRISTMAS

SNOW began falling just after midday. The sky was leaden, the day dark, with low, hanging clouds and gusts of piercing wind. Though the cars were steam-heated, they were cold, and about four o'clock they were dark. Outside, the great flakes fell steadily, and the engine forged ahead through a gathering storm that promised to be a blizzard.

It was a long passenger train, with one Pullman and a string of day coaches. The conductor came through at five, and the only lady in the Pullman asked him anxiously if they were on time, and if he thought they would reach Blenheim by ten o'clock?

He shook his head. "We're in an awful blizzard, Miss, and the drifts are deep. Looks to me as if we might be stalled a day or two on the road. I presume they'll have the snow-ploughs out soon as the storm stops. Don't be down-hearted. You won't starve. We're not out of provisions."

"But, conductor, this is the day before Christmas!"

"Just so! I'd like to see my wife and the kids on Christmas, but I don't reckon on it. We've a lot of youngsters aboard this train. I'm afraid it won't be much of a Christmas for them, poor things!"

He went on, and the young lady settled back in her seat with a sigh of disappointment. Seventy-five miles from home, no more than that, and she had not seen home and father and mother and the other dear ones in six long months. She was a traveling secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association, and accustomed to delays and vicissitudes of the road; but seldom had she so set her whole heart on arriving promptly at a given destination, as

on this particular occasion. The last college she had visited was in a small village, on the line which connected with her own home town, and it had been the farthest western point in her itinerary. As she turned her face eastward, she had been as happy as a bird faring home to its nest. Friends at the college, weather-wise in the tokens of the region, had urged her to stay over a day, but she had been resolute in her determination to have a home Christmas, and had started, her heart singing its undernote of joy with every mile, until, after a threatening morning and a gray afternoon, the night had settled into this blizzard.

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She was the single lady passenger in the Pullman. Her companions in the car were three men, two young and one old. The latter, who had been regarding her with interest, came and stood beside her seat.

"I think I am not mistaken," he said; "you are Miss Mary Reynolds, of Blenheim, Judge Reynolds' daughter?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Well I am your father's old classmate, Michael Saunders, and am on my way to his house. You may like to read his letter, and then, if you will allow me, I'll sit down by you and tell you how I happened to be running up from Pasadena in the teeth of such a tempest as this which has pounced upon us. I was not sure of you, or I would have spoken sooner. When you were talking with the conductor just now, there were vibrations in your voice that made me think of your mother. We boys were all in love with her, but Dick Reynolds carried off the prize. Your father speaks of you as taking this route home for the holidays."

A little cheered by finding a friend, with whose name she was familiar, although she had never met him before, Mary Reynolds spent the evening more pleasantly than she had anticipated. They had supper, with a cup of steaming coffee, and she went to bed, as the conductor assured her she might as well do, sleeping soundly till morning.

She awoke to behold a world of white and glistening splendor. Everywhere a world of deep, pure, sparkling snow. Far off the mountain peaks ice-capped and glorious. The train was standing still, hemmed in by drifts on every side. It was a beautiful, white, cold Christmas, and they might have been on the earth alone, for all trace of other inhabitants. The wind had ceased, the sun had come forth in the clear sky.

"Conductor," said Mary Reynolds, with a good morning that was tranquil, though not gay, "I wish you a Merry Christmas. Do you think we'll get on in an hour or two?"

"There is no telling," he answered. "I fear we'll have to spend our Christmas where we are."

"There are children aboard?"

"Lots of 'em, and their mothers are as blue as they are. We've hardly rations to go round them all, you see, and their lunch baskets are pretty nigh used up. After a while, if we're stalled all day, the farmers from yonder will get in with their sleds, and bring us bread and meat. But it's a blue Christmas for the children."

"Mr. Saunders," said Miss Reynolds, "don't you feel as if this is an opportunity to do a little missionary work?"

"Whatever you propose," was the ready reply. "Where you lead, I'll follow."

"Well, here we are, and we can't help ourselves. Providence has placed us here on Christmas Day. And close by us, are enough little people for a small Sunday school, and they are going to miss their Christmas altogether; to have no presents, no dinner, and no fun. Now I propose to brighten the day for them, if I can."

"May we help?" diffidently came from one of the young fellows across the aisle. "I've my banjo with me."

"And I can sing," added his companion.

"Four of us," Miss Reynolds cheerily said, "ought to be able to entertain the little wayfarers. Do you suppose the conductor will let us have them in here?"

"I don't fancy he'll object very strenuously, but I'll ask him," said Mr. Saunders. "I'll propitiate the porter first. He'll be the one to object if any one does. Now, shall we make a tour of the train?"

The tired mothers and fathers, and the cross and fretful children on the train were lounging in every sort of uncomfortable posture in the seats of the day coaches. Children were crying and quarreling.

One wee bit of a girlie, golden haired, with eyes hidden by long fringed lashes, lay curled up in a corner of the seat nearest the door. She was sound asleep. On her frock was a tag. She was traveling all by herself.

"Poor baby!" said the conductor. "She has gotten into life's hurly-burly too soon. That little one was shipped from New York to San Francisco, by somebody who wanted to get rid of her. At Frisco there was nobody to receive her, and the express people are sending her back."

Miss Reynolds bent over the little sleeper. Five years old, perhaps, her name on the tag, Elsie Dane, prettily dressed, yet a waif that some one had thrust out on the cold charity of the world. The lady, with a tender hand, adjusted the shawl that covered the child, and took a look over the car. Then she signaled to one of the gentlemen who had entered it with her, and immediately he struck up a merry jig on his banjo. The tumpa-tumpta-tum of the banjo may not be the heart-stirring beat of the drum, nor the sweet-thrilling note of the fife, but it has a rollicking melody that goes straight to the souls of children and common folk who like a tune. Everybody understands the banjo; this performer played it blithely.

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At once the car felt the bracing effect of the ringing melody. The children quit their fretting, their crossness quelled by the music, the mothers brightened up, the fathers and big boys threw back their heads, straightened their neckties and looked more cheerful. Then the little proces-

sion of men went through the train, and presently returned, bringing with them all the children they could gather. They followed the banjo player as the children in Browning's ballad followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin, but to no such calamitous end. For when they were all assembled in the same car, a young lady with a voice as sweet as an angel's, said:

"Children, this is Christmas! Merry Christmas to you, one and all! We're going to have some fun in our car, and we invite you in. Eat what breakfast you can, and then come. I've got candy and popcorn!"

So she had. Not very much, but enough to go round the little crowd.

Mr. Saunders picked up golden-haired Elsie, and carried her into the parlor car in his arms.

The Christmas music never sounded sweeter than when Mary Reynolds sang Martin Luther's hymn:

Give heed, my heart, lift up thine eyes,
Who is it in yon manger lies?
Who is this Child, so young and fair?
The blessed Christ-Child lieth there.

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber, kept for Thee.

My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest, ancient cradle song.

When she stopped, the children clamored for more, but she asked her friend to play again on the banjo, and then Mr. Saunders came to the front and taught them a carol. By this time the whole train had caught the spirit of Christmas, and far out over the new-fallen snow rang the triumphant chorals.

The conductor came in after awhile with a bag of peanuts, which were received with acclamation. Then, as the children ate them, he drew Miss Reynolds aside.

"I do not think it would be wrong for you to read the letter that was sent, as it happened, with this little girl, whom I am carrying back to go into an asylum. The man to whom it was addressed handed it back to me. He said there was some mistake; he had children enough of his own, and knew nothing about this party."

Mary Reynolds opened the letter. The child was now awake, an exquisite little being with great brown eyes, and a skin like satin. As she saw the writing, she suppressed an exclamation. The hand was familiar, though weak and scrawling.

DEAR BROTHER: This letter will not be sent till I am dead. I am now in the hospital, and the doctors say I cannot last more than another day. Take care of my Elsie. She is alone in the world. MILDRED DANE.

"I knew Mildred Dane at college," said Mary Reynolds. "This is her child. She was Mildred Rutherford, and this letter, addressed by the nurse or doctor, is to Mr. Samuel Rutherford. It got to the wrong person. Until we can find the right one, I will assume the charge of Elsie. I remembered to have heard that Mr. Dane died somewhere abroad. I suppose the poor mother was penniless. She was an orphan herself. I am sure she would like me to have Elsie."

"But the Express Company?"

"Their duty ended when they delivered the parcel," said the conductor. "I am carrying her back. You can make inquiries at the other end when you reach Blenheim. I'll take the responsibility of giving her to you for the present."

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There was some demur about the propriety of this, but Mr. Saunders added his word, and Mary Reynolds, draw-

ing the little one close, said: "Now, baby, for awhile you shall belong to me—my little Christmas Child!"

Noon was drawing near. The weather was cold, but growing milder. Over the snow came farmers with eggs, butter, bread, meat, cold chicken, pumpkin and mince pies, and the hungry passengers bought out all they offered. It was a rather jolly Christmas after all. Everybody talked to everybody else. One man performed some sleight-of-hand tricks. Another told stories. The people visited back and forth in the cars, and the children frolicked in the deep snow. In the late afternoon they had a regular singing service, and just as their voices trailed off into silence the snow-ploughs came, and there was a shout that the way was clear.

Late on Christmas night Mary Reynolds reached her father's house, carrying with her little Elsie. The stalled Christmas lives in the memory of both, for Elsie's uncle was never found, and Elsie Dane, blossoming into rare loveliness, is still to Mary Reynolds her Christmas Child.

THE LITTLE RIFT

"I DECLARE," said Mr. John Freeholder, laying down the carving knife and fork, with the air of a martyr, "I declare I am discouraged! What do you do with this knife, Lucilla, to make it so dull? The best steel which can be bought is ruined the instant it gets into this house. I suppose Bridget cuts the kindling-wood with it. Anyhow, I can't carve roast beef with a thing that has an edge like a hoe. Would it be too much, my dear, to ask you to have the steel brought on the table, so that I may sharpen this knife myself, since you and Bridget appear to have no time to look after so trifling an affair?" The politeness was cutting, if the knife was not.

Mr. Freeholder finished his tirade in a grieved and vexed tone of voice, frowning at his eldest daughter, who looked as if she wished to take her mother's part, and when the steel was brought by Bridget he sharpened the knife with much unnecessary emphasis. Mrs. Freeholder, opposite him at the table, flushed and bit her lip. Tears were not far from her eyes, but she was proud and held them back. Fifteen years of married life with John Freeholder had not accustomed her to his maelstrom of fault-finding nor rendered her insensible to pain when he made, in public and before his family, sarcastic observations on her housekeeping, her dress and her management of the children.

Singularly enough, it was only in public that Mr. Freeholder behaved thus unkindly. When husband and wife were by themselves he was generally affectionate, gentle and even generous. But before people, though aware that his conduct caused his shy and sensitive wife acute suffer-

ing, he persisted in following the impulse of the moment, and if anything had annoyed him at the office, or if Mr. Freeholder had had losses, then he gave his ill-temper the reins, and everybody at home felt its power. Words can sting like whip-lashes.

Rupert, the seven-year-old son (there were six children in all) was chatting in an undertone with his little sister, and giggled aloud, just as Mr. Freeholder, with a flourish, laid down the steel, and proceeded to cut the meat. Instantly the boy's father was upon him, fancying the laughter at his expense, and unmindful of Mrs. Freeholder's deprecating excuse:

"Never mind this time, papa; Rupert forgot."

"Yes," he answered, "that is always the way; naughty Rupert forgot, forgot that I have forbidden any child under ten to speak at this table, unless he is first spoken to. Children should be seen and not heard; Rupert you may leave the table at once. You can have your dinner in the kitchen, sir."

This was a great disgrace. "Well, papa," said Agnes, a pretty girl of fourteen, not in the least afraid of her father, and very sympathetic with her mother, "I think it would be pleasanter if you could pass over a thing, a little thing, once in a while. Rupert has been so good all day, and Elsie made him laugh. Why didn't you send her away from the table, or me, and why do you get so fretted at any trifling thing? You called it a trifle yourself just now when you spoke to mother about the knife."

"Agnes, do not be pert and forward," said Mr. Freeholder, sternly, passing his plate for potatoes.

"These potatoes, my love," he added a minute after, again turning to the unfortunate mistress of the feast, "are watery and underdone, raw in fact. If Bridget cannot even boil a potato properly, she would better leave, but I do not know that it is wholly her fault. If you would only look after things yourself more carefully."

So the uncomfortable and dreary meal dragged itself through, the father finding something as a peg on which he might hang a complaint, in every dish and every course, the mother growing more and more silent and pale, the children, hardened by the frequency of such scenes, devouring their gooseberry pie at the end of the repast, with as much relish as if they had been seated at a table where everything was cheerful, and serenity reigned.

Well said the wise man, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith," and "Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices, with strife."

"Mamma," said the oldest daughter, when Mr. Freeholder had stamped himself out of the house to prayer-meeting, shutting the front door with a bang, "What does ail papa? Why is he so worried, so cross and unreasonable always? He never has a word of praise for us when things are at their best, and he is forever blaming everyone when they are the least bit wrong. I am ashamed of my father. Don't let us go to prayer-meeting. Papa did not wait for us."

"Darling," said Mrs. Freeholder, "don't allow yourself to speak with disrespect of your father. Business worries him, probably. He really does not mean all he says. It is simply a matter of habit into which he has fallen, and personally, though it used to hurt me, I do not mind it so much now. I am distressed at the impression it leaves upon our friends, because it somehow puts the wife and the home into a false position, when the head of the house indulges in unkind reflections in the presence of guests. When we are alone I can endure it."

"Yes, mamma, you do endure it. Your lip quivers, your eyes are blurred with tears, you cannot help shrinking as if you had been struck when one of the boys is harshly sent away from the table. When I grow up and am married," said the precocious daughter, firmly, "I will begin

right. The first time my husband dares to find a word of fault I'll crush the thing in the bud. See if I don't!"

Mother and daughter went to prayer-meeting, entering the lecture room late. Mr. Freeholder, from his seat at the pastor's right, sent them a severely reproving glance which the wife did not trouble herself to return, and which the girl did return, with one of defiance. Mr. Freeholder sometimes felt as if he could shake Agnes, she was so lacking in duteous behavior, but she was beyond the age of parental correction, and, at home, he occasionally spanked one of the babies, as a vent for his anger with their sister. That look of hers across the room made him very uncomfortable tonight.

"Big as she is," he said to himself, "she'll find that I'll punish her in a way she'll feel. My lady will be ordered to her room, and shut up for a day or two on a diet of bread and water, if she doesn't learn to control her eyes and her tongue."

Poor Mr. Freeholder! At this instant, the pastor with benignant face, and courteous tone, said, gently imperious:

"We will be led in prayer by Brother Freeholder."

It was a beautiful prayer, but not a syllable, not a sentence in its course, aroused any other sensation than that of antagonism in the heart of Agnes Freeholder. Her mother instinctively guessed her state of mind, and was not surprised, when, the meeting over, and an opportunity afforded young people to meet the committee, and unite with the church, Agnes, who had lately been seriously considering the matter, walked resolutely past the door. She said nothing, but had she spoken, she would have said that her father's crossness and her father's prayer were, in combination, her stumbling block on the threshold of the kingdom.

"Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones," says the Saviour, and "woe to him by whom the offense cometh!"

Years after, John Freeholder bore his cross in humiliation, when his sons fled their homes as if it had been a prison, his daughters remained obstinately outside the Church, and even his wife, patient to the last, treated him with tolerant pity. Unrestrained temper and petty despotism had brought forth their legitimate consequences.

> It is the little rift within the lute,
> That by and by will make the music mute.

THE CRITIC

THE minister was in his study half way through the preparation of his next Sunday morning's sermon. There was a good deal of sickness in the congregation and he had made many calls during the week and had attended two funerals in outlying districts of the parish. The Rev. John Inglis was fifty years old, and he had spent twenty-two years in the country church in which he had first been ordained and installed. To this village of Deepwater he had brought his bride and in their little manse they had lived their quiet, useful life, working faithfully for the good of the people, in the name of the Lord. Here their three children had been born. Olive, Marjorie and Edwin were now beyond their childhood, and only the second, Marjorie, was at home. Olive was living with an aunt in a distant city that she might study art, and Edwin was in his last year at a preparatory school. Marjorie had been delicate and had been taught at home by her parents. She was at eighteen a beautiful young girl, with hair of spun gold and eyes blue as the sky. Fortunately for himself, Mr. Inglis was not wholly dependent on his annual salary, and having private means amounting to a small independence he had been able to afford, in the manse and for his family, some luxuries that in the eyes of certain members of the congregation seemed extravagant.

Sermon-writing had not been easy that Friday morning, but at last, after several disappointing attempts at a beginning, the brain had summoned its energy and an illumination had come as the minister studied the text. He was a man of prayer, and no sermon of his was written without a petition that the Spirit would guide his pen. Yet the most

consecrated Christian and the most devout pastor has his side of human weakness, and if anything could disturb the serene temper of John Inglis it was a needless interruption when he was in his study. His wife knew this, and as far as she could, Marjorie helping her, she kept visitors away between nine and twelve. However, a visitor had called who was insistent and refused to state her errand. She said she must see the minister himself, then and there, and Mrs. Inglis, softly opening the door, laid her hand gently on the forehead of her John. He looked up, and a little brusquely said, "Well, what is it?" softening the next instant, and adding, "Pardon me, dear. I suppose somebody wants me. I hope whatever the call is it can wait until the afternoon."

"It," replied Mrs. Inglis, "is Mrs. William Crump, and I have in vain tried to ascertain her errand and to put her off, but nothing will do except to let her see you at once."

"I will go down," said the minister. "That woman is a thorn in this parish. Things were much pleasanter before the Crumps came here."

"Hush, darling," said his wife. "I am afraid she will hear you. I left her planted in the hall at the foot of the stairs. She said she must see the minister in his study."

The minister resigned himself to the inevitable, and presently Mrs. Crump, large, florid and important, a woman who reminded one of a ship under full sail, made her impressive entrance. She had a deep, resonant voice, and conveyed an idea of massive and ponderous strength. Her type was peculiarly offensive to a man who, like Mr. Inglis, objected to domineering women, and who had already had his troubles even in a rural parish with ladies who were disposed to sit on the box and drive.

"Good morning, Mrs. Crump," he said, rising and motioning her to a chair. "What can I do for you? I hope no one is ill in your home. I met your husband yesterday and he looked very happy."

"Ephraim Crump," said that gentleman's spouse, "is a person who never disturbs himself about anything so long as his dinner is good and his house is well kept. The weight of responsibility is on my shoulders. Ephraim takes no interest in the children's upbringing, and it is nothing to him that our Willie does not like your preaching, and that Agnes says you use too many illustrations."

The faintest shadow of a smile passed over the face of Mr. Inglis. Willie and Agnes, indeed! The latter was a pert child of twelve who had inherited a great deal of her mother's complacent vanity, and the former was a boy of fourteen rather backward for his age. Neither of these children was sufficiently mature to pass judgment on the sermons of their pastor.

"I have noticed," replied the minister, "that Willie has not attended the Bible class regularly of late, and his teacher has regretted that when there the boy has been inattentive. Agnes is hardly old enough as yet to be a censor. I am sorry, Mrs. Crump, that my work in the pulpit does not appear to you what it should be, and I want to do the best I can for all the dear children of the church; but I must preach the word that is given, and I have to consider the whole congregation, not merely two or three individuals."

"Well," answered Mrs. Crump, rising from her chair, "I told Ephraim that you ought to hear the truth from somebody. Ephraim said I would not have the nerve to tell you what I said to him, but I am not afraid of you or any one else. I think that your daughter Marjorie sets a bad example to the young girls of this parish by being so lazy and useless. So far as I can judge she does not assist her mother by working in the kitchen, and Mrs. Inglis has to keep help. Then she does not go to school and distracts the attention of the young people by singing frivolous songs at the guild meetings, instead of hymns. I do not approve of Marjorie."

This time Mr. Inglis did not smile. To tell the truth, he was frankly angry; for his pretty Marjorie was as the apple of his eye. Besides, he did not feel that any one had a right to interfere in or comment upon his household arrangements. Being a gentleman, he controlled himself, and simply observed to Mrs. Crump, who looked very like a turkey with plumage spread, "I must ask you to excuse me. I cannot discuss Marjorie with any one, and our home affairs are not the concern of anybody in the congregation. Good morning." And opening the door he bowed the lady out.

Mrs. Inglis was not surprised when a half hour later her husband emerged from the study and sought her in the living room. She could always soothe him if he were ruffled, and she only laughed merrily when he told her what Mrs. Crump had said about Marjorie. She had divined before this that some of the good sisters disapproved of her methods in training her daughter, and she knew, too, that Marjorie Inglis was very much the prettiest girl in the countryside. What did exasperate her was the fact that Mrs. Crump found fault with the sermons. "John," she said, "did it ever occur to you that twenty-two years is a very long pastorate in these days? You have declined several calls in the past, because you thought your duty was here. Now, if another comes wouldn't you imagine there was an intimation that you should find another field, John?"

"Calls do not multiply, Emily, when a man is fifty. There are so many younger men who are stepping into the arena that the middle-aged or elderly minister cannot hope for promotion."

"Fiddlesticks, John!" said Mrs. Inglis, irreverently. "You are in the meridian of your years. You never preached so well and you never were so fit to do the Lord's work as now, but you are not obliged to think of making a change on account of Mrs. Crump. Just go back and

finish your sermon. After dinner I'll drive with you when you go to visit Nellie Richards, who, poor child, is worse, and longing to see you. Then I'll unfold a plan I have in mind."

The plan was simply this. Mrs. Inglis had for some time wanted her husband to drop work for a whole year and take a greatly needed rest. They were waiting for an emergency that was always spoken of as Uncle Robert's legacy. She proposed that Mr. Inglis should resign and with her and the children go across the ocean to the highlands of Scotland, and there spend several months. They could then determine their future wanderings, and she felt assured that when they returned to their native land other work would open for him. Not one conversation, but at least a half dozen were necessary before they reached a decision; but at last the husband yielded his assent.

To leave Deepwater required a wrench, but Mr. Inglis knew the hearts of most of his people, and realized that a new voice might bring them the old message with greater effect than his could do.

As for Mrs. Crump, she was more than ever aghast when she discovered that after his resignation Mr. Inglis intended to take his family to Europe. "Purple and fine linen!" she was heard to mutter. "Worldly, worldly. Minister's folks should be humble. Well," she said, finally, "I trust the next minister will not be so learned as Mr. Inglis, and the next minister's wife not so fashionable as Mrs. Inglis." Ephraim, however, for once asserted himself. "Miranda," he said, tersely, "we'll never again have a better preacher or a better friend in Deepwater than the man that's going away. When the next minister comes, if I can manage it, I'll prevent your talking so much. The thing you've got to learn, my dear, is how to mind your own business."

THE CHRISTMAS BABY

"I HAVE never forgotten the day father brought home the Christmas baby."

"Tell us about it, Cousin Ruth."

It was a winter evening, and we were getting ready for Christmas. We Hoberts make a great deal of Christmas, and always garland the house with evergreen, twining ropes of verdure around balusters, and wreathing the chandeliers and pictures, as well as having a big Christmas tree in the front drawing-room. You see, the Hobert connection is very large, and at the holidays we have a real gathering of the clans from far and near. The kith and kin begin to rally about a week before Christmas, and the days that lead up to the best one of all are full of mirth and jollity.

Cousin Ruth Hollister was a dear, elderly, gentlewoman of our blood, but several degrees removed from close relationship. But we adored her, and when once in a while, she came from Alabama and joined our holiday circle, our joy was overflowing. Her presence beaded the sparkling cup with delicious foam. She was simply the most entertaining person to have in one's company, vivacious, charming and unaffected, filling the gaps in conversation, and making old and young alike at ease. One never saw her idle. She sat erect in her chair, her hands engaged with fleecy wool work. She was usually knitting white shawls for somebody, and when one was finished she began another immediately. She loved to talk and knit at the same time. It was great luck to have her with us at Christmas.

What would the world do without the gracious presence of the winsome women, known as old maids? Women suf-

ficiently detached from home cares to be at leisure for other people. Women with rare comprehension and genuine sympathy! To their band belonged Miss Ruth Hollister!

She was never at a loss for a story, and we depended on her for one, not in vain, as we went on, busily weaving and tying our wreaths.

At our urgency she began her tale, speaking in a low, clear voice that made one think of a brook flowing on softly.

"There were eleven children in the house, for mother had nine of her own; no, Edith, you need not pity her; she was young with her children, and enjoyed them, and the two extra ones were orphan nephews of father's. We had a big, rambling house, and plenty to eat and wear, but no frills, no superfluities; we were comfortable and respectable, and never dreamed that we had few luxuries. All of us helped in the work, and the little negroes, of whom there were, perhaps, eleven more, helped Black Sally and Dinah Gray, their mothers, as cheerfully as we helped our sweet mother. She was queen of the whole domain house, plantation, and wide estate.

"Father came in one wild, wet Christmas Eve after a long ride. The raindrops clung to his beard, and glistened on his coat. He was booted and spurred, and he did not, as usual, at once lay off his things and get into slippers, but stood around, hat in hand, as if he were going out again.

"'John, dear, supper's most ready,' said mother. 'You are not too tired to enjoy it, I hope?' she asked, anxiously. 'Did anything go wrong in town? Must there be worry ahead? What ails you, John?'

"'Not a thing, sweetheart. I sold what I took to market and the price is in my pocket. I'm only worrying over a baby I saw down below. I bought all you told me to. I've a hamper full of things.'

"'A baby?' said mother, disregarding the last speech.

"'Yes, sweetheart. The forlornest bit of a baby you ever saw. Its parents were going West. The father was struck with fever, and died last week; and the mother, a fragile little creature, all worn out by hardship and travel and sorrow, passed away this morning. Unless they can find some folks who want that child, he'll have to go to the poorfarm. He's a little waif, sure enough, but three months old.'

"'John!' said my mother, severely, 'why did you not bring that child directly to me?'

"'Your hands are overfull, Ellen. There are eleven here now, and the youngest is only four.'

"'What do you know about it, John? I haven't complained. I am raising the whole family pretty well, I think. Where will you find a rosier, plumper, better behaved, more obedient set of children than ours? We're perishing for a baby, and that's the truth. Go straight away tomorrow morning, John, and bring that baby here. I'll feed him, and clothe him, and kiss him, and cuddle him, and spank him when the time comes, exactly as if he were my own. And if nobody claims him, he'll round out our dozen for us, John!'

"Father just shook the rain off his coat, and laughed one of his big hearty laughs. He put his arms around mother and gave her a tremendous hug.

"'You sweetness!' he said. 'You darling! I knew what you'd say. I've got that baby with me. He's in the barn this minute.'

"'In the barn! This cold night! For pity's sake, John, bring him to me.'

"Well," Cousin Ruth, went on, "when mother saw that desolate baby, she cried and cried and cried. He was such a mite, so poor in flesh, like a little old man, with a wizened three-cornered face, that looked as if it had seen the miseries of a century. Dinah Gray, whose black skin hid the whitest nature that ever a woman had, bathed the 'lile pick-

aninny' and nursed it at her breast, for she happened to have a baby of her own, and would you believe it, that child grew into a perfect picture of beauty. Strong and straight and fearless, a sturdy boy on his legs, and the pride and pet of the whole household. We named him Christopher. It seemed a good name for our Christmas child!

"We had the jolliest Christmas you can imagine that year. Presents for everybody—not one left out—and all of us having just what we wanted most; but the very finest gift of gifts was the baby. From the hour he came things took a turn with us for prosperity. Mother would never say she loved him just as she loved her own, for she was the soul of truth, and her conscience made fine distinctions. But one day she said to me, when she and I were occupied together over some domestic task, 'I wouldn't wonder, Ruth, if I loved Christie a wee bit more than I do the rest of you, for I mix him up in my thought with the Babe who came one night in Judea; the Christ-Child loves my poor Christopher best, I am sure.' Mother was a good woman," added Cousin Ruth.

"She was that," said our mother.

"Did you ever learn anything about his parentage?" inquired Edith.

"Not for some time," said Cousin Ruth. "Chris grew up amongst us, one of our very own, went to school and to college, as my brothers did, and worked on the farm in vacation just as they did. Father and mother treated him like their own flesh and blood. One more doesn't make as much difference in a large family as in a small one, anyhow. Chris proved a master hand to learn; he was cleverer than any of our boys. We had forgotten that he did not truly belong to us. And he, of course, had never realized that he was adopted into the home; he was so thoroughly ours, through and through, when, one Christmas Eve, a bombshell burst in our very midst.

"A stranger came from town with a letter of introduc-

tion to father! He proved to be a lawyer, and he was looking for a certain child supposed possibly to have lived in our neighborhood, after the death of its parents, David and Dora Parsons, nineteen years before."

"Of all things!" exclaimed Edith dropping her gourd pine. "After nineteen years! How extraordinary!"

"Reality," said Cousin Ruth, "is much more extraordinary than fiction!"

She paused. After a moment she resumed the thread of her story.

"It transpired that a fortune had been left to Christopher's mother by some relatives in England. All those nineteen years it had been accumulating, and there was nothing for us to do, or for him, when matters were satisfactorily proved, but to give one another up and let him enter on his inheritance."

"Cousin Ruth," asked the young lawyer who was among the kindred, "were there means of identification? And was it not singular that the relatives had waited so long?"

"Yes, to your first inquiry, Francis. There were letters and there was an old Bible, in which David's mother had folded her marriage certificate. And yes to the second query, too. But to do the English cousins justice, they had lost sight of their far-away kin in America, and only a succession of deaths made them stir in the matter."

"So you lost Christopher after all you had done for him! How ungrateful in the lad!" commented one of the older uncles, with a shake of the head.

"No, Jonathan Frazier," said Cousin Ruth, "I have not told you that we, in a measure, lost our boy Christopher! He is Christopher Hobert Deane now, and I hear from him every month, and, in fact, I'm expecting him to join me in New York when I finish my visit here. Then I'm going over to Surrey, to spend the winter and spring with him and his bride."

We were thinking of this when there was a merry jingle

of bells at the door, and presently a great stamping and shouting. Snow was falling fast! It would be a white Christmas. In came, with a rush of keen and frosty air, a splendid, tall fellow.

"If you thought, Ruth Hobert, that I'd stay in New York and spend my Christmas at a beastly inn, all by myself, when you were within a hundred miles, you've clean forgotten your old Christie. Here I am!"

"And here you'll stay!" was a general chorus of welcome so hearty and cheery that Christopher was in a moment at home.

. . . . . .

He, then, had been Cousin Ruth's Christmas Baby, or at least, her mother's. He had brought her people good and not evil, blessing and not bane. All their affairs had prospered. Sons and daughters had achieved honorable distinction. Her parents had lived to a good old age. The child, in the midst of them, that winter's night long gone by, had brought them the special benison of heaven.

THE FIRST FOOT

THE little dressmaker was tired. She had finished and sent home the last stitch of the year's work. Everybody had hurried her, as people do, all wanting their gowns in time for the New Year's reception at the pastor's house, and all making more fuss than usual, because this reception was also to be a wedding occasion. Nan Gilchrist was to be married. From her babyhood, Nan had been the darling of the parish, and now that on her twenty-second birthday, New Year's Day, too, she was to be a bride, and, what was more, the bride of a very rich suitor, whose father had been a boy in Little Windham, the excitement in the parish reached the highest pitch.

Little Windham women did a great deal of their own sewing, and Miss Rivers, as a rule, took charge only of the cutting and fitting, and acted as general adviser about the styles and trimmings. But this had been an exceptional season. The crops had been better than in seven years, and Little Windham's purse had been plethoric. People had money to spend. Miss Rivers had engaged several young girls to help her, and her business had been booming. She was tired, but who minds being tired when everything has gone well, when there are no especial worries, and the outlook for the future is radiant?

Miss Rivers had been particularly pleased because Nan Gilchrist had insisted on having her dresses, even to her wedding-gown and the pretty going-away gown, all made in her home town, by her home dressmaker.

"When I am married, Tom may give me what he likes," she said to her mother; "but my trousseau shall be what my father can afford, and I'm not going to be so fine that

the rest of you must be pinched for the next twelve months. I should be ashamed if I were selfish, now when I am so happy."

"You never breathed a selfish breath in your whole life, Nan," said her little mother, kissing the girl's fair brow.

The clock struck eight, and Miss Rivers began to think of going to bed. She heard the young people laughing and chatting as they went up the street. They were going to keep watch-night in the old church. Years ago Miss Rivers had kept watch-night, too, but that was when she was a girl, and Jasper Vance had watched the old year out and the new year in, at her side. A foolish quarrel had separated them. Jasper had gone West and never come back, and a report had been brought that he was married and settled. Emily Rivers had long since ceased to grieve, but at anniversary times, since her mother's death, she had been very lonely; yet, though she had been asked more than once, she had never felt like saying yes to any lover's plea. The last one to urge her to change her condition had been Deacon Binns, wealthy, close-fisted, and the father of six children. Nothing in her had responded to his rather tepid middle-aged wooing, and she smiled as she reflected on the cheerfulness with which the Deacon had accepted his dismissal. There were several spinsters of his acquaintance who were willing to become Mrs. Lemuel Binns, and the Deacon was well aware of it and looked about at his leisure.

The door opened and in ran the bride of tomorrow. Nan Gilchrist was tall and slender, with blue eyes and golden hair.

"I want you to know that I am perfectly delighted with everything you have made for me, Miss Emily," she said, "and I want to be sure that you'll come round early in the morning to pin on my veil."

"In the morning, dearie? You are not to be married until three o'clock."

"Ah, but I want to be sure everything will be exactly right, so I'll try on my whole outfit in the morning. How soon can you come, Miss Emily?"

"I'll come as soon as I have wished a happy New Year to whosoever is my first foot over the sill," said Miss Rivers.

"Well, I hope your first foot will bring you good luck, dear friend," answered Nan gaily. "I must fly. I stole away. Tom will be waiting."

Tom was waiting at Miss Rivers' door, and he tucked Nan's little hand within his arm, and they went to the church together just for an hour of prayer and a hymn. But they sat in the last pew, hand in hand, and in the shadow of the organ loft where nobody saw them. Soon they slipped out and went home, and Tom bade Nan good-night, and turned his steps to the little country inn, where he was stopping. As he crossed the office, he observed a gray-haired stranger talking with the clerk. Tom Vance thought he knew everybody in Little Windham, and he wondered who the newcomer might be. He heard the clerk say:

"Yes, sir, she lives in the same old place, three streets to the left, around the corner. She lives all alone now. Are you a friend of hers?"

"A very old friend," was the answer. "Call me early, won't you?" He went upstairs to his room, and Tom sauntered over to the desk and examined the register.

"Jasper Vance, from Idaho, and daughter!" he read. Then he blew a low whistle and a smile spread over his face. He had spent the summers of his boyhood here in Little Windham, and he knew most of the old stories. As a prospective bridegroom his heart was brimful of sentiment, and he thought happily that maybe there was to be a happy New Year for somebody besides Nan and himself.

"Miss Rivers will have a New Year's call, or I'm out of my reckoning," he said, as he laid his head on the pillow.

Tom wakened early. A man does not need to be called twice on his wedding day. He stepped to the window and looked out on the beautiful and sparkling winter's morning. Snow, hard packed and crisp, lay on the ground. The sun came up in a golden sky, the East shining and resplendent.

Early as it was, his neighbor in the next room was astir, too. He had company in his room, and Tom heard a child's voice and a child's silvery laughter. Before long, the door opened and closed, and the two went out and took their way down the silent street.

The man was broad-shouldered and strong. Presently he caught up the little six-year-old girl—a fairy figure wrapped in a coat of snowy fur—and went on with great strides, carrying her.

"In a hurry, it seems!" said Tom to himself, getting into his own heavy overcoat and taking the road in his turn. He followed the two, for he was going their way. He wanted to be the first caller at the parsonage. They evidently meant to be the first callers somewhere.

They stopped, sure enough, at the little dressmaker's. Tom did not loiter, nor spy, but as he crossed the street at Miss Rivers' corner, he naturally glanced in the direction of her house. He saw her door opened, and the little girl ran over the threshold first; then the man stepped in after, and the door was closed.

Nobody can see through a heavy oaken door. But if Tom could have seen, he would have been pleased and thrilled with a fellow-feeling of sympathy. For, as Emily Rivers stood there, Jasper Vance, hat in hand, said: "Jessie, wish the lady what I told you!"

And the child's sweet voice had responded: "A Happy New Year, the happiest of all, to the best woman in the whole wide world!"

Emily Rivers bent and kissed the child. Then the child's father folded them both in his arms.

"Jasper!" said Emily Rivers, "Jasper!"

"Jasper, my dear, and nobody else, who has come across a continent to be forgiven, and to lay all he has at your feet."

Later Emily heard the story of Jasper's life since he had left Little Windham, of his marriage with an orphan girl, the daughter of his dead partner, and of his wife's death five years before this time, since when his little Jessie had known no care and attendance but his, and that of other men with rough hands and kind hearts.

There were two weddings in the parsonage that New Year's Day. One was that of Nan Gilchrist and Tom Vance, a bride and groom most beautiful in the glory of their youth. An hour after they had plighted their troth, and when the friends had spoken their congratulations, a hush suddenly fell on the throng, as a stalwart man, bronzed and gray-headed, but still in his prime, stepped from the group near the bridal party, and a little woman, in a gown of Quaker gray, was seen at his side. The second wedding was that of Jasper Vance and Emily Rivers, and the clergyman's fee for the second ceremony was paid in broad gold pieces, and was larger than that which was given him for the first.

Little Windham went home after the double reception, to begin for itself another very happy New Year.

HIS FIGHTING CHANCE

THE woods near Elsinore were beautiful the year round, but they were incomparable for verdure and fragrance on the edge of summer. Then not only were the trees magnificent as they lifted their splendid stature to the sky, the green branches giving homes to great numbers of birds, but rhododendron and wild honeysuckle made clumps of bloom and hives of sweetness in the long winding paths and in the openings here and there to the sun. Elsinore was in New England, but the people who had lived there a century ago had given the place another name, a name no longer on the map. Little by little the old settlers had passed away, and the farms they had cultivated and the forests they had loved had alike passed into the hands of newcomers from northern Europe. In the graveyard on the hill there were white stones, inscribed to the memory of fathers and mothers whose children were today piling up fortunes in New York and Chicago. The newcomers had named the village that grew up between the woods and the bay Elsinore. Hither, one summer, came a young doctor and his wife to find their first home, and lay as they hoped the foundations of future prosperity. John Folsom had a thin, eager face, and the pallor of one who has burned the midnight oil and studied late and long in college days. He had been known at the university as a grind, and at the medical school and during the period when he was a hospital interne he had toiled strenuously. Ethel, his young wife, had been engaged to him since their school days. Her family and intimate friends had not been favorable to her marriage, not merely because Dr. Folsom was poor and had a hard road before him, but because they thought him too grave and self-centered to be a good life companion for a girl so gay, bright and fun-loving as Ethel. No opposition sufficed to daunt Ethel's courage or

shake her steadfast faith in John, and on his part he gave her the tribute of a single-hearted adoration, worshipping her as if she were a queen.

Mr. Deering, Ethel's father, had offered to buy a city practice, or a share in one, for his son-in-law, but John had his own independence and preferred to invest his little patrimony in an abandoned farm near the scene of his happiest years, those of his early childhood. He had ascertained that there was no doctor in the neighborhood and that one was sorely wanted, and with Ethel's consent he resolved to begin the practice of his profession in this rural community, that had become largely Danish and Swedish. Out of this immigration a new type of Americans was to be manifested.

Patients came slowly at first, and the Folsoms had time for much rambling in the beautiful wood-paths, returning from their walks with arms full of flowers to beautify their living room. Presently, however, as Dr. Folsom's skill became known, he had less time on his hands, and when it was discovered that he had the nerve and delicacy of a surgeon and could perform critical operations at need his margin of leisure became very small. Ethel found herself often solitary, and especially at night, when the doctor was away often for hours, she grew desperately lonely and had to make a stand against depression.

Before a year had gone by, during the time indeed when the snows lay thick in the forest aisles and the birds had flown to the South, Ethel was aware of a new reason for apprehension. John had never been physically strong. His wife at first did not venture to question the wisdom of his course when she saw him resort to a stimulant to renew his strength or to keep him from taking cold after a long drive. When, later, she found that he was growing sleepless, and that when he was most in need of rest his eyes were wide open, his brain active, so that none of the usual efforts to rout insomnia were of the least avail, she became alarmed.

But once or twice the doctor told her not to worry herself; that he must have sleep at any cost, and that he thought it better to take a harmless drug that would induce sleep than to be unfit for the next day's work. The argument seemed reasonable, and Ethel dismissed anxiety, until she could not deceive herself any longer. It became all too soon evident to the loving wife that her brilliant and gifted husband was becoming a victim to the most insidious and deadly drug in *materia medica.* The victim of alcohol is not fettered with chains so closely interwoven and so binding upon soul and body as the slave whose fetters are welded by morphine.

Ethel noted the small, half-suggested signs of the despotic habit for weeks before she ventured to remonstrate with a passion of tears. One day she broke down altogether. The victim of morphia gradually yields not only in the minor morals, but in the major ethics, to the dominion of the vice. Dr. Folsom ceased to be as truthful as he had been, he forgot appointments, he was not to be trusted with the unreserve that is given to the faithful physician. His wife saw it, and one day, when she had in vain tried to secure from him a promise to let the evil thing alone, she threw herself on the floor beside her chair, buried her face in her hands and broke into a storm of sobs. Thus her husband found her. He had bidden her good-bye for the day, and she had not expected him back. In an instant, as he entered the room, he was at her side tenderly lifting her up, and his arms went around her. In that moment there came over him the gloom of a deep remorse. He was embracing not merely his wife whom he loved, but the mother of his unborn child. A few months more and that child would be in their home.

"Ethel, darling," he said, "is this what you do as soon as I am out of sight? Am I breaking your heart? Am I killing you? O God, forgive me!"

Her head was on his shoulder, and she tried to stop her weeping, but she could not without a struggle.

"This is not good for you, dear," he pleaded, "nor good for the one that is coming. Tell me, my dear, what it is that has so discouraged you."

"John," replied the wife, "the thing that has discouraged me, and almost made me hope that I may die, and the baby die, too, is the thing that you do not see. You are killing yourself. You have reached a point where you cannot live without morphia, and you know without my telling you that you have been increasing the doses every day. It isn't only that you won't be a good doctor; before very long you won't be a good man. The people around here are beginning to notice, and the old minister looked at you very curiously and at me with compassion when he was here yesterday. Let us go somewhere else and try all over again."

Dr. Folsom left the room and went out to fasten his horse to the post. Returning, he sat down by Ethel's side. Looking straight into her eyes, he said, "Ethel, I have made something of a fight, but not enough. I have realized although I did not like to admit it, that I was getting where I had not very much of a chance, but I have a fighting chance yet, and with you to help me I'll down this thing. We'll fight it together, dear. From this moment no form of morphine, no liquor, shall pass my lips, there shall not be another puncture of the fatal syringe that brings such heavenly ease and calm to tired nerves."

"Don't say 'heavenly,' John," answered Ethel, shuddering. "The word isn't well applied. Yes, we'll fight it together, but with the Lord's help."

The hour that followed was like a sacrament. They sat hand in hand, the wife and the husband, with few words, but with the perfect understanding of two souls that were blending their united strength in a supreme effort of resistance to temptation on the one side and of heroic affection on the other. They knelt together and each audibly prayed, and into their compact there came a third, unseen

but not unfelt; and the third, as to the children in the fiery furnace ages ago, was revealed as the Son of man. When Dr. Folsom went out that day to visit his patients he went as a nobler and braver man than he had been before. He had recognized his peril, admitted his sin, confronted the adversary and accepted his fighting chance.

The promise repeated in Revelation over and over is to him that overcometh. John Folsom strove with God on his side and his wife to cheer him on, and he gained the victory. The shackles fell from his limbs; he became a free man.

From the hour that he made his decision and set his face humbly and reverently toward pure living and the bearing of pain with fortitude, as if by miracle, his health improved. The fight was a hard one, but inch by inch the demon of temptation was routed, and by degrees the man grew stronger, abler for the daily task and finer in every development of his life.

Elsinore gained in importance, and the forest of which it had been so proud in time took on the appearance of a city park. The grand trees were not cut down, and the rhododendrons and honeysuckles were left, but roads intersected the woods and clearings were made at intervals for a better view of the bay and the incoming ships. Dr. Folsom became known in due time as a nerve specialist, and patients sought his sanitarium and the healing he knew how to give.

Children played in his home, the eldest seeming to him always a little more precious than the rest, for he felt as if ere yet that child was born she had been to him as an angel of redemption. Ethel shed few tears except those of joy, as time went on, and her people at home spoke of her husband with deep respect and forgot that they had not promoted the match.

John Folsom, under God, had won a splendid victory when he took his fighting chance.

IN MARTIN'S ALLEY

YOU would never in the world have found Martin's Alley, had you been searching for it, without previous familiarity with that section of a great city in which it was hidden away, much like a needle in a haystack. All cities have a certain family likeness, and the one where Martin's Alley was located was not very different from New York or Chicago, although geographically it was distant from each of these big towns.

Martin's Alley was a tiny court, narrow and dark, for the sun was hidden from it by large adjacent business buildings. Long ago it would have been effaced, and the place it occupied taken up by lofty structures devoted to trade, but for the fact that it was a fag end of an estate, which could not be sold until the youngest heir came of age. Even then, by an eccentric will, made many years ago, when the thriving city was merely a cluster of farms, the ground on which Martin's Alley was built could not be disposed of. Foredoomed, the Alley seemed to be but habitations of squalor and want, and the conditions of dirt and disease obtaining there made it a real menace to the community.

However, everything in this world of our reaches an end at last. The day dawned when Isabel Frazer, twenty-one, beautiful and accomplished, set her foot on the deck of a Cunarder and sailed away swiftly over the great ocean to look at her inheritance. From her sixth year Isabel had lived in England, receiving her education there, and spending her summers in the Scottish highlands, where there were numerous relatives who loved and cherished the little American cousin. She was not only the youngest of her

family, but its last survivor, her older brothers having died while she was still a child. Her people in London and Aberdeen were willing that she should visit her native land, but they claimed that as her ancestry had been wholly British there was no occasion for her to feel the least regard for the United States. Except as her income might be derived from investments and rents on this side of the water, they saw no reason why Isabel should do more than cross the ocean, accept her responsibilities, and return as soon as might be to themselves. They were all gentle folk, living in conservative ways, with old homes and settled habits. They were a little annoyed that Isabel showed so much persistence in wishing to live in America, and they could not understand her enthusiasm for the Republic. Nevertheless, she had enthusiasm, and, accompanied by an aunt and a former governess, she reached the city of her great possessions, established herself comfortably in a large hotel, and began, without delay, to enjoy the crisp and stimulating atmosphere of this magnetic country.

On the steamer coming over, Isabel made the acquaintance of a group of people, who, as it happened, lived in the city to which she was bound. Among them were a clergyman and his wife and a brother, a young civil engineer, a trio who had looked beneath the surface of society and who were deeply impressed with the sadness and hopelessness of certain modern conditions. It is natural for acquaintance to mature rapidly on shipboard, and the ladies accompanying Isabel being accustomed to impose no constraint on her independence, she and Ralph Halstead knew one another better at the end of the fifth day on the Atlantic than they could possibly have done after six months of ordinary life on the land.

One evening they were pacing the deck in the moonlight, the man, as his wont was, talking with animation and energy on his favorite theme, and the girl listening with the sympathy that kindles conversation to a glow.

After a while Isabel said, "Pardon me, Mr. Halstead, for hinting that I think the weak point in your argument is that you want to reform everything by wholesale. What a woman would do would be to clean house, to get at some little point where the need was great and the gloom dense, and let the light in there, and make a beginning in that way. Socialism, if I understand it, is making the mistake of attacking evils all along the line, instead of starting at foundations and quietly working up to improvement. The pick-ax would do more good here than the battle-ax."

The young man looked at her with admiration in his eyes. She was tall and slender, with a deep rose color in her cheeks and the charm of sweet expression that changed with every wave of feeling that passed over her face. He said nothing for a moment, and then replied, "If you will permit me, Miss Frazer, when we arrive at St. Francis, I will escort you to Martin's Alley. I don't know who owns the forlorn place, but I fancy anyone who likes may go in there and start a little missionary work. I happen to know about the spot because the firm that employs me has its headquarters not far away. The Alley is perhaps two blocks in length, and it has the most awful condition of affairs one can imagine, as bad as anything in East London. Misery, want and destitution reign. You have been so interested in the problems that beset us in America, and you are going to be, we hope, a permanent resident, so why should you not see what is to be seen in the city where you are going to live?"

"I accept your challenge," Isabel replied. "I will certainly go with you to this laboratory of wretchedness, and if I can I'll make a demonstration of what a woman can do when she is in earnest and is willing to try what may be done by lending a hand. Don't think for an instant that I underrate what you wish to accomplish, but when I hear the plans that you and some other of my friends urge so trustfully I feel as if you were dipping up the ocean with a bucket at the end of a rope."

"I'll show you Martin's Alley," he replied, and they said good-night.

Little did Isabel dream that this Martin's Alley was her own property. Quite as little did Ralph suspect the same fact. Had he done so, delicacy would have kept him silent. Of Isabel's wealth he, of course, knew nothing, and she herself had still to learn its extent and the possibilities it would put into her possession. But before she visited Martin's Alley in the company of Ralph Halstead, her eyes were opened. She was in haste to learn all that was encumbent upon her, and before she had been a month in St. Francis her lawyers had taken her all about the city and shown her every bit of real estate that stood in her name. Last of all, they passed Martin's Alley. "You will not need," said the elderly gentleman, who in his courtly fashion was showing her about the city, "to spend any time in looking at that little court. Now that you are here, we shall lose no time in tearing down those rickety buildings and turning out the wretched set that have burrowed there. They are too poor to pay any rent to speak of, and have really been living on sufferance. The ground is valuable, and it will sell for a magnificent sum."

"What did you tell me the place is called?" asked Isabel.

"Martin's Alley. It isn't down on the map; the name somehow fastened on it ages back."

"Please stop the carriage," said Isabel, decidedly. "I must see this for myself. It is horrible to think that all along it should have belonged to me."

The old lawyer shrugged his shoulders. "Another of these modern girls," he said under his breath, "full of ideas and hard on the bit. Evidently she will have her own way."

She said very little that afternoon, as with a friendly word asking pardon for the intrusion, she stepped from one dingy tumbled-down home to another, feeling that home was strangely misapplied to these noisome dens where men,

women and children, discouraged, degraded and dirty, were closely crowded together; where crime and intemperance were in ambush. Her heart ached with pity. She grew paler and paler, and as they emerged into the open street, where the air was better than in the close court, the lawyer said, "Now you have been here once, you need never come again. It is positively not safe to visit that Alley without a policeman at your elbow."

Ralph Halstead had already called upon Isabel since her arrival in St. Francis, and the two elderly gentlewomen who chaperoned her were noticing with a little apprehension that she seemed pleased to have him come often. Aunt Evelyn had already satisfied herself as to his thorough respectability. The evening after Isabel's visit to Martin's Alley it happened that he called. Before he had time to utter more than the usual commonplaces of greeting, Isabel said to him impulsively, "I have seen that dreadful place that you told me of on the steamer. I have been there today. I went with my lawyer, not knowing anything about it. I am ashamed to tell you that the place belongs to me, but I am not to blame. I inherit under my grandfather's will, and I have never known, never, anything about such sin and misery, such want and anguish as I saw there today. I did not know that little children could be such spectres, or women look so starved." She sat down, burying her face on a cushion. Ralph knew that she was weeping. A moment he stood irresolute, then, bending over her, drew her hands from her eyes. He had never called her by name before, but now the barriers of custom and convention were suddenly broken, swept away on the tide of emotion. "Isabel," he said, "Isabel, it has not been your fault. You are an angel, and you shall do angel's work. You shall do it there. Oh, if only you would let me help you."

"Isabel!" exclaimed a shocked voice from the doorway, "what in the world is the matter?" Aunt Evelyn stood

transfixed. The young people, however, aroused from their preoccupation, looked at her with a smile. Isabel's tears fled before the surprise in her aunt's glance. Ralph wisely said nothing, but his look showed no embarrassment. "I have been heartbroken, Aunt Evelyn," said Isabel, "over an appalling situation that has been at my door ever since I was born. Mr. Halstead knew the situation, but neither he nor I knew till today that I had anything to do with it. He has been trying to comfort me, to help me."

"But I still don't understand," insisted Aunt Evelyn, "why Mr. Halstead should——"

"Because," said the young man, boldly, "I am daring to hope that Isabel will let me help her in this and everything else during the rest of our lives." He had ventured all at a stroke. It was not what he had meant to do, but Isabel repaid him.

"Yes," Aunt Evelyn," she said, "Ralph and I are going to help one another the rest of our lives." They stood hand in hand before the old lady, like two children. She crossed the room and took their hands in hers. "I will give you my consent," she said.

Soon a new year dawned for Martin's Alley. There was a housecleaning there indeed. The old rickety houses were pulled down, but the tenants were transferred to other and pleasanter quarters. The work of restoration for the older men and women was long and discouraging, and some of the wrong that had been done was never undone, but for the mothers and the children, the boys and the girls, a new year opened, and when Ralph Halstead and Isabel Frazer were married, they built new homes for the poor in a breezy and healthful neighborhood, and this for the sake of their betrothal day, they christened Martin's Place.

MISS EUNICE

THE last of the summer boarders, the ones who always lingered through September, had gone, but yet Miss Eunice Bridgeman gave no sign of leaving. She occupied a small room at the top of the house, and now that the merry schoolboys who had been her companions on that floor had packed their trunks and left, with regrets and good-byes, and promises to return another year, she was lonely in her attic corner. All the inmates of the second and third floors were gone, and the farmer's daughters had joyously taken possession of their own rooms, rented through the boarding season. Mrs. Linquist began to wonder when Miss Eunice would give notice of her departure; one guest was not profitable, and she wanted to settle down for the winter as soon as she could. But Miss Eunice came down with the same cheerful, bird-like sprightliness of her three meals a day; went trotting off for the same afternoon walk, and, with the same gentle smile, handed out her board money every Monday morning.

"Why don't you tell her that we are not in the habit of keeping any one after the last of September," said Mabel Linquist to her mother.

"I really think you ought, mother dear," said Louise.

"Oh, girls, I don't like to," the mother replied. "The poor lady never has any letters, and she may have nowhere to go. If she is in any trouble, of course she must stay here. We could not turn out anybody in trouble."

"Of course not," both girls eagerly assented. That was the spirit of the Linquist home.

"But, mother, why have you had that suspicion?" inquired Cousin Tom, who half the time called his aunt mother, as her own children did.

"Well, Tom, she has an anxious, worried look when she fancies nobody's watching her, and she's poor, and proud, and discouraged, I can tell, so I'll not disturb her. If it gets too cold upstairs, she may take the sunny end room on the second floor. The house is big enough to shelter one old lady."

"So is your heart," said Tom, jumping up and kissing his aunt.

"Miss Eunice," remarked Mrs. Linquist, on the next Monday, "if you wish to stay until cold weather, you must let me change your quarters. Move down to the little room on the hall with Mabel and Louise. The price will be the same now the season's over."

Miss Eunice hesitated. "I know how good you are to let me stay, but I shall bother you only four weeks longer, Mrs. Linquist, then I shall have to go."

"Where shall you go?"

"I don't know. The last of my money will be spent then, and I haven't any more coming. I thought, maybe, I could get some work for the winter somewhere. If I can't get work, I shall starve."

It was a sorrowful story of loss and unkindness that Miss Eunice at last told her gentle hostess. She had only one living relative, a brother, and he had not been seen or heard of in his old home for many years. Miss Eunice supposed that he was dead.

Mrs. Linquist took the thin hand in hers. "My dear," she said, "you will just live here, and be one of the family, and help me when you can, as a sister would. You should have confided in me sooner. I am sure you will be contented here, with those who love you. So set your mind at ease. Here is your home as long as you may need one."

Miss Eunice remained, summers and winters, for five years. She became so efficient a helper that the Linquists paid for her services, and she grew younger with the years.

One day in the gloaming of an October afternoon, a stranger knocked at the farmhouse door.

"I am trying to find a lady named Eunice Bridgeman," he said.

Miss Eunice was called. The tall, sun-bronzed man looked at her steadily.

"Sister, it isn't possible you have forgotten little Phil?" he began, but he got no further.

"Oh, Philip," she cried, "I thought you were dead!"

"Not a bit of it, Eunice. But I've been long from home. Three months ago, home began to tug at my heart. I realized that I had done wrong, to stay away and make no sign. But I did not dream that father and mother were gone, nor that you were so poor. Can you forgive me, Eunice?"

Philip had not returned with a vast fortune, but he had brought back a competence. He took his sister to a home of their own in town, and he lavished gifts on the Linquists. The bread cast on the waters had returned after many days. Every summer an elderly sister and brother repair to the Linquist farm, and take the two finest rooms for many golden weeks. Miss Eunice, in her rich satins and fine laces, is the same bird-like little woman who spent her time so cheerily under difficulties, in the attic corner in a summer of the past.

THE LITTLE MILLINER

DURING the week of prayer, there were meetings of the greatest interest in the churches of Locust Dale. Three churches, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian, held union services every evening, and, alternating in their different edifices, were thronged by rapt and earnest congregations. Never were prayers more fervent, never was singing sweeter, never was there shown a lovelier devotional spirit, than in these delightful meetings, which rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young, sought with ardor and enjoyed with zest and enthusiasm.

The little milliner who went out to work by the day, just as dressmakers have from our earliest recollection, felt her soul quickened and her piety revived by the genuinely spiritual meetings. Tired as she usually was when after a day of hard work, trimming and lining, and spangling and wiring and shaping, making over old hats, and evolving new ones which her customers pronounced "loves" and "dreams," she would not for the world have missed a single meeting. And being a practical little body, with a knack of living out whatever creed she adopted, she set out, devoutly, to let her light shine, carrying the glow of the sacred week far into the late winter, and the early spring.

"Dear Lord," she whispered, as she tripped up the brown stone steps of Mrs. Chambers' elegant avenue residence, "Dear Lord, help me to be a living epistle here today, a witness for thee. Enable me to do something that thou canst approve, even in my humble calling." Such petitions always find their answering opportunity very soon.

Florence Chambers met the little milliner with a clouded

and frowning face, on the threshold of the sewing room. Florence was a belle, just out this season, and greatly admired, but her temper was not of the sweetest, though, outside her own home, few imagined that the pretty girl could sometimes be both cross and shrewish.

"Miss Armour," cried Miss Florence, "in your hurry to go to your meeting last night, you put Alice's feathers on my hat, and gave mine to her. It was very careless in you to make such a stupid mistake."

"I will change them at once," began Miss Armour.

"You cannot," said the young lady fretfully, "for my sister went away before daylight on a week's visit and has carried her hat with her. I only wanted to let you know how careless and stupid I thought you. I blame it entirely on your craze for going to meetings."

"But, dear Miss Florence," returned the little milliner with some heat, "I surely did my full day's work. I am sorry to have annoyed you, but I did not mean to do it. The meeting must not bear the blame."

"Oh, well," was the answer, "when a blunder is made, apologies do not repair it. I shall take my hats after this to Madame Floubert," and the angry young woman walked away, hearing as she shut the door, the worker's plaintive regrets.

The little milliner was only a girl herself and human, so it is not strange that she could not see her work for tears, and that when she dashed them away a feeling of proud resentment sprang up in her heart, and dyed her cheek. But, presently, this text came into her mind, as if spoken by an audible voice, "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Thinking of this, she forgot the little flurry of the morning, finished the tasks she had set herself to do, and at noon went home to her cat, her cup of tea, and the little chop she broiled for herself over the coals of her landlady's range.

In the afternoon, the milliner had another engagement. It was one she had made for herself a Sabbath or two before, when sitting a couple of pews behind old Mrs. De Lancey, she had noticed how shabby and rusty that dear old friend's best bonnet had grown.

"The first day that I can make time," she had said, "I'll set a few stitches for Grandmother DeLancey."

Mrs. DeLancey was left at home by herself all day, her daughters having places as saleswomen in a great and fashionable shop and her son being a bookkeeper employed in a railroad freight office. Her son was a widower, and his little boy also shared the home, which was a pretty and very tidy flat, up four flights of stairs. The little boy was already a bread-winner with a place in an office. It was very merry and cheerful when they all came home at night, tired to be sure, but each with something pleasant to tell, and the only lonely time was for the old mother through the long day.

In glided the little milliner, as cheerful as a bird, and laid a half dozen pink carnations on her friend's lap.

"I have two hours, Mrs. DeLancey," she said, "I've brought my needle and thread, my thimble and my scissors, and I've found a nice piece of black velvet in my bureau drawer, a piece which looks like you, and here I am, ready to make over your go-to-meeting bonnet."

"You dear child!" said the old lady, lifting the bonnet out of a large green bandbox, in which it kept company with an antique lace veil, a pair of black kid gloves and a folded kerchief meant for wearing around the neck.

"You have very few holiday hours, Mary," said Mrs. DeLancey; "I appreciate your spending some of them for me. Now tell me the text of last Sunday, please. It was dreadfully slippery, and the girls would not let me go out, and, poor things, they were too tired to go themselves."

"'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed,'"

reverently repeated the little milliner, adding softly, "Isn't it a true text, one that Christians can understand? And what do you think of this bit of verse, which I found in a newspaper yesterday," she said, pulling it out of her pocket, and putting it in her friend's hand.

There is nothing I can fear,
  There is naught can bring me low,
Blessed Saviour, ever near,
  Hopeful unto thee I go.

Though the way be dark and dreary,
And the pilgrim's feet are weary,
Yet the heart is full of cheer
With the Saviour ever near.

So the two women chatted over the bonnet, their hearts growing warm with love. Most of us are afraid to introduce our Christian experience into our ordinary talk, and so we lose precious inspiration and blessed help which might be ours.

But when the little milliner went home that night, she had no thought of the good seed she had been sowing. At the depths of her being, Florence Chambers had a conscience, though the shallows did not reflect its power. Happening to pick up the Bible on her dressing table, as she was preparing to make her dinner toilette, the young girl opened at the very passage which had come into Miss Armour's mind; she read it, and was impressed:

"The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

"Why, that was what Miss Armour showed me today. There is something real in her religion, and I wish I had it myself. I behaved like a wretch, and I am ashamed of myself."

There came to the little milliner's house the next day a little box, which, when opened, disclosed the sweet fragrance of violets, a lovely bunch of them, and with them was Florence Chambers' card, and on it these words, "For-

give me for my rudeness, I thank you for your gentle patience."

If the next regular prayer meeting night found Florence in her place among the worshippers, it was to the little milliner's courtesy that the circumstance was due. Would we not do well, dear friends, to put our Christianity into practice more and more in our daily lives?

POLLY'S BEEHIVE

TO begin with, Polly Antrim's beehive was not a real hive with real bees, yet her business in life was, speaking if I may in a parable, the manufacture of honey. She was a tall, slim girl, twenty years old, and very pretty, with her shining hair coiled around her beautiful head, her pale olive cheeks just touched with pink, and her dark-brown eyes. Polly Antrim made caps for a living, old ladies' caps, of delicate lace, with dainty bows and frills, and she had a number of customers, who always bought their new caps of her, and sent her their old ones to do over when they were a trifle shabby. As a general thing old ladies don't wear caps in these days, more's the pity, for nothing is quite so becoming to a soft wrinkled face, and thinning hair, but there are always a few elderly women who adhere to old styles and who are willing to pay a good price for a handsome thing. Among these Polly had her trade, and, year in and year out, her nimble fingers and charming taste brought quite money enough in to keep her and her mother in comfort.

What about the beehive? I'm coming to that. The Antrims lived on the top floor of a tenement house in a nice neighborhood, where very respectable people had their pleasant flats. This house, and the next, and the next, and the one across the street, and the one at the corner where the grocery was, and many another in the same part of the town, swarmed with children. Polly took it in her head one day to have a little evening school for some of these, and to call it a beehive because if she had called it a school they would never have come. There was a large, empty room over the grocer's stable and she borrowed that, promising

that there would be no mischief done, and holding herself responsible for the good conduct of her little friends.

"And pray, Miss Polly, what are you goin' to learn them?" asked Mr. Ashe, the grocer.

"To sing, and to knit," said Polly, confidentially. "I'm going to keep them out of the street till bedtime, three nights a week, if they'll only be allowed to come to me. The first night there is a bit of trouble, Mr. Ashe, you can turn us all out, and never believe in me any more."

"Better let her try it," said the good-natured policeman who had kept order on that street, and knew Polly's nice ways with children.

The first night they gathered around Polly, most of them had to sit on the floor, but they were not particular and the eight or ten who had been invited to form a club, were so interested in making plans and rules that they would not have found fault had they been compelled to stand up the whole hour. When Polly had at last said, "Now, girls and boys, we're going to call this the Beehive Club, because bees are busy and bright and bold and brave," there was a general clapping of hands, and one little fellow piped up:

"Bees make honey, don't they, out of flowers? We haven't got no flowers."

"We've got to be flowers and bees both," said Polly. "We're bees—got to sweeten the world for our people at home, and help everybody to be happy. Jimmy Morrison, I nominate you for president of the Beehive."

Jimmy Morrison, a red-haired, rough-fisted little fellow of ten, had been sidling out of the room, but on hearing that he was to be selected president, perhaps, he concluded to remain. Knitting did not appeal to the boys, but whittling did, and Polly had provided work of some kind for everybody, and in the course of a few nights, everybody was sure to be present, at eight o'clock, when the proceedings began.

"There is a lady, one of my dear cap ladies," said Polly, "who will buy all the lace and all the horse reins the girls can knit at the Beehive, and also all the perfectly smooth, round sticks the Beehive boys can whittle. When the money for these comes in, we'll have a feast at the Beehive, so it's worth while for everybody to work."

The gentle, white-haired cap lady behind Polly was a shut-in. She had not walked a step for ten years. But she belonged to God's great hive of busy bees, and helped to make money, even though she never left her room.

Well, the weeks passed by as weeks do, one day at a time, and there came a night when there were very sorrowful faces at the Beehive Club. They tried to sing, but sobs choked them. They tried to knit, but the girls dropped their hands idly in their laps. The president didn't need to rap for order. Everybody was in order already. Polly Antrim was very ill, indeed, with diphtheria.

Mr. Ashe came to the door, "You young folks better keep still tonight, and not sing, Glory, hallelujah! Polly's very low, I've heard."

"As if we wanted to sing Glory, hallelujah!" said red-haired Jimmy in a flash. "I tell you wot we'd better do, kids! We'll have a prayer meeting in this here Beehive, and ask God to let Polly get well."

"What good will that do?" said one little infidel. "The doctor can't cure her, they say!"

All the infidels in the world are not grown up. There are children who have had such hard and bitter lives among evil associates that they have forgotten the sweetness and simple faith of childhood. God help such poor, forlorn children. God help us to open their eyes.

Jimmy turned on the young speaker.

"What good will it do to pray? It'll bring heaven down here to drive away the sickness, and it'll show the doctor what he must do next. Never ask such an ignorant question as that, Leopold—never again."

The scene in the next half hour was a curious and pathetic one. Voice after voice was lifted in simple pleading, "Do, dear Lord Jesus, do please spare our Polly. The Beehive needs her. The cap ladies need her. Her old mammy needs her. Please, dear Christ, save Polly, but Thy will be done."

When the children left the Beehive and crept quietly home, they were very silent. Some of them cried themselves to sleep. Sturdy Jimmy alone marched to his house with head erect and confident bearing.

"God will answer our prayers!" he said cheerily. "I am not afraid."

We, who are more familiar than Jimmy was with the Bible, remember certain ringing phrases, "Is thine arm shortened that it cannot save? Thine ear heavy that it cannot hear?" Thank God, this never happens. God always hears, can always save. His right hand and his holy arm can bring the victory. Even over a foul fiend of disease, the only thing always is to be reconciled to the will that cannot make a mistake, the blessed, perfect will of God.

Polly lived. She still carries on the Beehive Club. She still makes caps for dear old ladies. And the earth is a happier place because Polly is in it.

As for Jimmy, I expect great things of him yet. He is a manly young Christian. What more can be said?

WHEN DOROTHY WENT HOME

THE two women who were watching in the room next the one in which Dorothy Raimond was sleeping that last quiet slumber which no dreams disturb, glanced uneasily at each other as the clock struck twelve. When the last long stroke died away on the air, Mrs. Cranfells shivered and drew her little shawl more closely about her thin shoulders. Miss Rachel Ann Chittenden, who was plump and comely, got up and stirred the fire, shaking down the ashes, and opening the draughts.

"I'm going to fix us a little supper, Melissy," she said, "an' boil some coffee. You'll be catching your death next!"

"It does beat all," said Mrs. Cranfells, in a puzzled, wondering way, "what John will do without Dorothy."

"What'll the hull township do without her?" The spinster paused, holding in her hand a cup into which she was measuring spoonsful of ground coffee. "What I say, without any irreverence meant, is this: What was the good Lord a-thinkin' of to take Dorothy Raimond to heaven, and leave old bed-ridden Madam Jones, who has wanted to go this four years? Dorothy, so pretty and young, and gay, so bubblin' over with joy, gone in a flash, and John left helpless and desolate, and old folks and sick folks stayin' on to suffer! I tell you, it shocks a body's faith."

"Mercy me, dear heart," said Mrs. Cranfells, "don't talk so. The good Lord knows best. He's taken Dorothy either from the evil to come, or else to some good far beyond what we can imagine. I seem to hear him sayin', 'Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.'"

Miss Rachel Ann did not reply. She was getting out

bread and butter and peach preserves, knowing where Dorothy had kept everything A sound in the other room startled her, but she repressed an exclamation. It was only John, coming down with a look of gaunt, white misery on his tearless countenance, and standing beside the coffin, with a gesture that went to the hearts of his friends. John had idolized Dorothy. They had been married only a year. This was their new house, built and furnished to suit her. Every bit of it was eloquent of Dorothy. John, too, was saying dumbly in a passion of mute rebellion, "What could the Lord have been thinkin' of?"

Kind Mrs. Cranfells went to the stricken man, and persuaded him to come into the warm kitchen and have a bite of supper. She and Miss Rachel Ann gazed, for a moment, at the beautiful, silent figure of their friend. A nameless peace and dignity lay upon that lovely, queenly face.

The man sat down by the table and tried to eat, but the food choked him. He put his head down on his hands and shook with great sobs.

"There! there!" said Mrs. Cranfells, patting his shoulder soothingly, "you've nothing to reproach yourself with, so don't fret this way, John."

"I have," he broke out. "I tried her patience lots of times. I brought mud in on my boots and tracked up her clean floor. I had the house painted white when she wanted it gray. I wouldn't let her join the church when she wanted to last Easter, because I wasn't ready to join, too. I've been cross, and scolded when the cooking didn't suit me. Oh! Dorothy, Dorothy, Dorothy, come back, and you'll see how changed I'll be!"

He tramped heavily off upstairs, and the women looked at each other in grieved dismay. "It's always so; when folks are gone, we wish we'd been nicer to them, don't we?" Miss Rachel Ann remarked.

"John was right good to Dorothy," said Mrs. Cranfells.

The clock struck one!

"You lie down on the lounge and kiver yourself with that quilt, Rachel Ann, and I'll take a nap in this easy cheer. We're doin' Dorothy no good."

If the three—the husband and the two friends—could have followed Dorothy behind that screen of silence men call death, they might not have grieved so sorrowfully. Dorothy Raimond had never been so vividly awake, so resplendently alive, as when her last breath floated away, and her soul, dropping the body, went light and free along the immortal road.

She was conscious of a strange gladness, a wonderful poise and freedom. As she walked beside a sparkling river, the flowers that touched her garment's hem were more fragrant than the roses. She walked with the elastic tread of a child, and first one, then another dear friend met her, and gave her greeting. Her mother, whom she had lost when she was a baby, came running over a green meadow, and folded happy arms about her, folded her closely. Her little sister Sadie, and her brother Ralph, were just behind; a troop of dear schoolmates; a girl especially whom she had loved and missed, one Pearl Maleen, all made her so welcome.

"You are just the same Dorothy," said her mother, "though you were so little when I came home. I'm so glad you are here."

Angels moved to and fro. They seemed very busy.

"You see," said Pearl, "they are forever flying around on the King's errands."

"Don't you do the King's errands, too?" asked Dorothy. "Oh, yes, but not in the same way. They return to the earth, ascending and descending. We go no more out, after we have seen our Lord."

So they talked, and all around were friends talking, and Dorothy had glimpses of wide, beautiful homes, full of pictures and flowers, and the very air was sweet and buoyant

and song seemed to fill it and make its background; song that was a radiance, alternating with silence that was a caress.

In the very middle of the gladness, there penetrated to Dorothy, a long, strange, wailing cry.

"Dorothy! Dorothy! Come back, my beloved!"

"It is John," she murmured. "John. He needs me."

She made a mighty plunge into space, and awoke.

Mrs. Cranfells shook Miss Rachel violently. Her face was as white as chalk. Her hands were shaking.

"There's a noise," she said, "in Dorothy's room."

Miss Rachel opened the door. She started back in sheer affright. Dorothy was sitting up in her coffin.

"I'm alive, Aunt Rachel," she cried, "where's John?"

Dorothy lived many, many years, and was on old, old woman before she finally went to her heavenly home. But her descendants still tell how she lay three days in a trance and heard and saw unutterable things. Never was wife so adored, for John always knew she had been given back to him from the very portals of the grave.

THE SENATOR'S DEBT

"WHAT a charming man Senator Blank is; so genial, so full of real *bonhomie,* and so eloquent on the floor. He has every quality for leadership. But where did he get that insignificant little wife; such a dowdy, so unused to society, so primitive? A wife like that is a positive handicap in Washington! Why do men marry so early, before they reach their full development and know their needs? And when they have made a mistake like that, why not leave that sort of wife at home, safely secluded in her native air?" Emily Borden poured forth this tirade without stopping for breath. She and her friend, an elderly lady, had just come from the beautiful Congressional Library, and had passed the Senator, an old friend of Mrs. Fanwood's, on the street. Mrs. Fanwood was a woman of sixty, who knew everybody and remembered everything. A fountain of agreeable anecdote and correct information. She was welcome at any dinner table and in any drawing-room, as welcome as the youngest belle of the season, and far more entertaining than she. Emily Borden, from college a year ago, and from New York at the moment, was Mrs. Fanwood's guest.

"Senator Blank owes his wife so large a debt of gratitude, my child," she said, as Emily finished her speech, "that a whole lifetime of devotion on his part can never pay it. The score between them would be formidable if there were not so much true love on both sides."

"Please explain. I don't understand."

"Of course you don't understand. How should you! But when the Senator married Mary Pillsbury, in a little backwoods town of North Carolina, he was keeping the country store. He sold women's dresses and sunbonnets,

molasses, soap, flour, hardware, cider, sugar, baking powder, tinned goods, biscuits, stationery, and whatever else is sold in a country store. He was fond of reading, but had only a limited education. The one wish of his heart was to know books and to study law. But the path to learning for him had been blocked by poverty. He had never known anything but grinding care.

"Mary said to him one evening, 'Dick, honey, you go ahead and study, I'll keep the store.' They were very poor, and they had two children. The husband laughed at her. But the next day, the next week, the next month, the wife repeated her plea. Dick's old mother, who used to sit by the fire smoking a clay pipe, one day stood up and put her wrinkled hand on the young man's shoulder.

"'My boy,' she said, 'Mary's right. She'll manage. I'm pretty strong yet, I'll help her; you go to college.'

"Dick went. He worked hard to pay his way, and the women worked hard at home. Just after he had finished college and the law school, the old mother died. The wife had no time to cultivate her mind, or study the arts of dress. She had undertaken to carry a heavy load; she had tackled a big job. The store was made to pay till the law office supplanted it. Dick went into politics. He rose rapidly, like Jonah's gourd, I think. Here he is now; the younger children are at good schools. The older boys are at West Point and Harvard, and the little dowdy mother and insignificant wife is where she ought to be, with the man she helped make. Emily, I could stoop and kiss the hem of her dress, I honor her so deeply."

"But, Mrs. Fanwood, she is common. She never could have been pretty. And she is not adaptable."

"Common she is not. She is the real thing; a sincere, strong, lovable, patriotic American woman, true to the core. In its way, an earthen jug that is real, surpasses a bit of plated ware. There are depths of tenderness in that soul; there is a fund of kindness; there is common sense. She

is ballast to her husband, who is mercurial. She keeps him from making mistakes. To me, she is finer than he."

"I suppose," said Emily with resignation, "that it is often like this, and that if we could lift the edge of a curtain and take a peep, we should find that successful men often owe a great deal to the wife or sister or mother modestly in the background."

"No doubt of it," answered Mrs. Fanwood.

THE LITTLE OLD LADY

THE great department store was thronged with shoppers. New York seems generally full to the overflow, yet there are seasons when the town has a peculiar aspect of gaiety, and Broadway, in its bright length, always cosmopolitan, is more than ever a street of sharp contrasts. There were many strangers in town on the sweet April day that brought together two women whose lot in life was so widely diverse, that only God's opportunity could have made them clasp hands. Mrs. Renwick had been selecting pretty things for her daughter, whose coming out was to follow her graduation in June. After that event, mother and daughter were to spend a summer abroad. Hobart Renwick, prosperous and sagacious, was so devoted to business that he seldom crossed the Atlantic except for a flying trip, but with the usual generosity of the American husband, he liked to have his dear ones enjoy themselves on either side of the ocean, and was never heard to complain of solitude if his wife elected to travel. His pride in her and in their beautiful daughter, Amy, was unbounded, and, so far as he could manage it, not even a crumpled roseleaf was ever permitted to disturb their peace.

Feeling a little tired, and remembering one or two notes that ought to be posted immediately, Mrs. Renwick decided to take her luncheon downtown. She had finished her errands in the store, and finding a little unoccupied table in the luxurious rooms set apart for the accommodation of women who wish to rest or write, she seated herself and began her task. Presently her attention was arrested. She hardly knew how. It was almost as if a touch had fallen on her shoulder. She glanced up, but she was as much alone in

the crowd of well-dressed people who passed to and fro as if she had been in a desert. She resumed her writing. Again came the slight, almost phantom touch on her shoulder. This time she glanced around the room as if inquiring whether any one in it had dared to play her a trick. She was still alone, but now her eyes were caught by a little figure in the corner, a figure quite alien in appearance to the moving panorama in its neighborhood. A little old woman, quaint and shabby, with a thin, sleazy black frock, a rusty cape, a bonnet the worse for wear, shoes out at the toes, and no gloves on the hands crossed in the lap, sat there in a rocking chair wrapped in a deep sleep.

Mrs. Renwick noted the tokens of extreme poverty in every detail of the dress, and her eyes filled with tears as she saw the thin white hair, the hollow cheeks and the purple shadows beneath the closed eyes of the old woman. Her heart was very tender to old age, and she had never turned a deaf ear to the appeal of want and distress. On the boards to which she belonged it was known that Clara Renwick was in favor of planning and carrying out liberal things, and in every charity in which she had a share, she preferred to do personal work and to care for the individual.

She finished and sealed her last note. Again glancing toward the corner where the little old woman slept in her chair, unconscious that she was attracting the gaze of the curious or sympathetic, she saw that the latter had not changed her position a hair's breadth. For an instant she had a mental conflict; should she go on her way or should she speak to that sleeper? She decided that she must speak, even though in doing so she might seem a trifle conspicuous.

A moment later it was the turn of the little old woman to feel a gentle touch, not on her shoulder, but on one of her weary hands. The tale of weariness is told by hands as it is not told by faces. The ungloved hands that Mrs. Renwick saw were red and swollen, as if most of their work

were scrubbing and scouring, and their broken nails and enlarged joints were eloquent of the fact that by their means their owner's soul and body had been kept in company. Yet there was something about them that made Mrs. Renwick aware that once, perhaps long ago, they had been soft and white, unstained and symmetrical, the hands of a lady.

Her touch was very light, but the old woman woke with a frightened start.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "I only sat down for a moment. I am going right on." Evidently she felt that some one in authority had noticed her, and that the intimation was to send her away.

"I fear," said Mrs. Renwick, very gently, "that you are not quite well. Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, no," replied the other, "I am perfectly well. I was a little tired and it was warm here, so I sat down and fell asleep. I am going right away. Do not let me bother you."

Mrs. Renwick laid a detaining hand on the thin arm as the older woman attempted to rise.

"It is almost time for luncheon," she said, "and these first warm days bring spring fever with them. I am sure you will feel a great deal better if you will come with me and have a cup of tea and something nice to eat."

A blush rose in the withered cheek. Surprise and something like dismay came into the faded eyes.

"I am not dressed like you," she said. "I am not fit to go where all the richly dressed ladies are. Besides, I am not hungry."

"One often feels that way," said Mrs. Renwick, "not exactly hungry, but able to eat a little if one does not have to cook it. You come with me. Don't think about your dress. It is all right. I am sure you will feel rested and stronger if you will do as I say."

Thus persuaded, the little old lady went timidly into the restaurant with her new friend. As they sat by a window,

they dropped into womanly chat over the delicious food that Mrs. Renwick ordered. Although her guest had said she was not hungry, she ate with the appetite of one whose meals had been sparing and far apart. As they talked Mrs. Renwick drew from her the story of her life, a common story enough. She had come to the great city from a country home years ago, had for a while been able to support herself very comfortably, until her strength had given out with increasing age; growing a little deaf and losing some portion of her sight she had been less able to compete in the labor market where there were thousands younger and better equipped than she. One by one her people at home had died, and now she was alone in the world. She had no money except what she earned by ill paid toil in scrubbing offices. She told Mrs. Renwick that she worked at a small weekly wage for a man who cleaned large buildings by contract, and that lately she had been ill and had lost the price of a fortnight's work—a serious loss, indeed.

"I little thought," she added, "long ago when I was a pupil in Miss Warden's school at Salisbury, that I should ever come to scrubbing floors in my old age. Anyway, it is honest work."

"Were you a pupil in Miss Warden's school in your girlhood?" asked Mrs. Renwick, gazing with new and eager intentness into the wrinkled face before her. "When was it, pray, and what is your name?"

"It was in 1852," was the answer, "and I am Betty Lester now as I was then."

"Betty Lester! and do you remember Margaret MacIlvane?"

"Remember Margaret! how could I forget her? She was the sweetest girl who ever stepped, and she was my seat-mate and chum."

"She is my mother," said Mrs. Renwick.

"Your mother? You are Margaret's daughter? Oh, my dear, my dear! Tell me, is Margaret living?"

"Yes, indeed; and how glad she will be to meet you again! When I was a little thing she used to tell me stories about you, and I was taught to call you Aunt Betty. Mother used to speak about the time when scarlet fever broke out in Miss Warden's school and the school being closed, she went to spend a month with you, so that her long journey to the north was saved her. Why, dear Miss Lester, or Aunt Betty, as I like better to call you, I have heard so much of your old home with the broad porch and the white pillars, the fig trees and the persimmons, that I know exactly how it looked in the peaceful days before the war. How can it have happened that you and mother lost each other so completely, and that you could be in the same city with me and with her and be in straits, and we not find it out?"

"The war changed everything," said the old lady, "and I could not beg. I paid my last room rent this morning and I have just precisely fifteen cents left in my purse. I knew where that would get me a decent night's lodging and a breakfast tomorrow. I saw no farther ahead than that. I had reached the last extremity, and I thought that maybe God meant to take me home to my dear ones."

"It was God's opportunity," said Mrs. Renwick. "He put it in my mind to stay here today, write my letters and take my lunch, a thing I seldom do, away from home. Come, Aunt Betty, you are going home with me, but first I have an errand or two in the store."

Mrs. Renwick stopped here and there at a counter and gave some rapid orders. Then drawing the hand of her charge through her arm, she piloted her to the street, where she called a hansom and speedily she and her friend were whirling uptown.

A few days later, no one would have recognized in the little old lady, dressed in a soft gray wool, with white turnovers at the neck and sleeve, her face already filling out and her brown eyes wearing a look of childlike trust,

the same person who had slept almost the sleep of death in her chair when Mrs. Renwick discovered her.

Mrs. Renwick's mother had recognized her at once, and had declared with joy her satisfaction that she should never leave her home again.

The two friends had many lost threads to pick up, many dropped links to weld into place, and Mr. Renwick, making investigations after the manner of a practical man, found or assumed to find a little income for Miss Lester in the distant Southern town where she had been a girl. In the hour when Mrs. Renwick's eyes fell on her and the phantom hand laid its feather-like touch on Mrs. Renwick's shoulder, an angel had been sent straight from the throne to deliver one of God's little ones and to bring two who could be mutually helpful into one another's company. The truth was that in her lonely, stately home Mrs. Renwick's mother had as much need of Betty Lester as Better Lester herself had of a home for her old age.

It is forever true that the angel of the Lord encampeth around God's saints, and delivereth them in their time of trouble.

HER NEW ROLE

THEY were old-fashioned people in Clover Dale, and not fond of new ideas. You would hardly believe that there was a place not fifty miles from New York, where Christian Endeavor Societies found themselves seriously handicapped by the popular feeling that it was not quite proper for girls and young women to take part in public exercises of devotion. They might sing, of course, and play the melodeon, but when it came to speaking and praying out loud before folks, their mothers drew the line; such doings were not modest in their opinion; they thought them forward. And the good matrons of Clover Dale were not going to allow them; they set down their feet solidly about this.

As it happened that Clover Dale was rather badly off for young men, who generally sought business opportunities elsewhere, the minister, an up-to-date man for all his white hair and his sixty years, was much troubled to get his Christian Endeavor Society well started, and to keep it going fairly in its course. By courtesy and of necessity, though it was styled a Young People's Society, a good many of the members were persons somewhat past youth, staid bachelors with heads growing bald, and gentle-mannered maiden ladies, who resembled outwardly fruit just menaced, hardly nipped by the frost, but inwardly they were sweet to the core. Even these ladies, far outnumbering the gentlemen, and, it must be confessed, surpassing them greatly by superior breeding and culture in some cases, were condemned by the sentiment of the community to silence in meeting.

"I am not pleased with the stiff sort of meetings we have here, father," said Milly Sunderland, the minister's

youngest daughter, one evening on her return from church. "You just ought to have been with us in Boston last week." Milly had been away on a visit to some cousins, and had absorbed the spirit of the city—the best spirit, enthusiastic, cheerful, strong—and she was ready to impress some of her new convictions upon society in the place.

"Chester Fowler led this evening," she went on. "He was frightened at his own voice and blushed furiously when he had to read the chapter. John Pollock made remarks. Elbridge Wheeler prayed. Rufus Alexander recited a piece of poetry, and we sang two hymns and came home."

"Four young men," said her father, "and how many young ladies?"

"Twenty-four," promptly answered Milly.

"Why, where were the boys?" asked Milly's mother.

"The boys," said Milly, "were present. We have no more. Of the older young men, Mr. Campbell had a township meeting on hand, Mr. Wells is away traveling, and Dr. Osborn was probably with a patient. Mother, if you could have attended one of the live, wide-awake meetings they have in Dr. Townsend's church, you would withdraw your opposition to girls speaking in public."

"For my part," the minister said, hastily, forestalling the words he fancied he saw on his wife's lips, "I do not see the point of your and the other ladies' opposition. I can't see where it comes in myself. Here are our girls, Violet, Marie and Milly, they all talk eloquently in the parlor and at the table; it is only in a devotional meeting that they must be debarred from their natural birthright, conversation."

"Well, answered the good mother, in a quiet way peculiarly her own, "I begin to think that the world is moving pretty fast. Here is Milly begging me to let her ride a bicycle; she's been riding one in Boston, and her Uncle Tom wants to send her one to surprise the Clover Dale

people and frighten the cows, and here you are, coaxing me to let her be your assistant pastor. Milly, my dear, I consent to everything. You may lead every meeting that you wish to, and I will be pleased."

"You mean it, mother? This is not a thinly veiled sarcasm, is it?"

"Certainly not, Milly, I have for some time thought that the parish needed a little stirring up."

So it came to pass that Milly led a meeting one Sunday evening before the regular service. She had planned for her meeting as a general for his campaign. Selecting the hymns with much care, she had gathered a few of the best singers at her house, and practiced the tunes till they knew them so well that the performance would be crisp, bright and full of emotion; not slovenly and dragging, as so much church singing is. She chose her chapter with reference to the topic of the evening, and asked five girls to speak in succession, just their own thoughts in the way they would put them if talking to one another.

Not to ignore the masculine contingent, Milly asked each of them to offer prayer, and, to be brief, she went to her meeting reasonably sure that there would be no pauses, no dead silence, when you could hear a pin fall, or listen to the beating of your own heart; no interval when furtive glances scanned the clock.

So far as these preparations were concerned, they were all very well. Anybody who fancies that a prayer meeting, or any other meeting or enterprise can be carried on successfully without intelligent arrangement beforehand is much mistaken. Once get your meeting fairly started, and one soul kindling another, and it will go, but you must see that the machinery is ready first.

But Milly did not depend wholly on methods. Before she went to her meeting that Sunday night, she sought a private interview in her closet with the great Master of assemblies, and there, by herself, with reverent and earnest

pleading, she asked for help and guidance. Her prayer was heard; all prayer made in faith is heard, and never fails of an answer, though we cannot always read the answers, nor understand them.

Clover Dale had heard that Milly of the Manse, pretty little Milly Sunderland, would appear in a new rôle, and that was enough to insure a good attendance. In fact, no such attendance had ever been dreamed of for a C. E. meeting there. The deacons all came, the old ladies turned out in force, several farmers drove from remote portions of the township to the center, and the Young People's Society found itself the object of great interest.

Now Milly was glad that she had not omitted that last half-hour alone.

She began with a little flush of shyness, a vibration in her voice that trembled in spite of itself, but almost immediately self-consciousness passed and she was aware that she was equal to the occasion. The first few moments over, there came to her a sense of quiet power. She had the meeting well in hand.

As the hour reached its conclusion the tall form of the old minister was seen at far end of the room. He came forward and stood beside Milly's chair. They were just rising to sing, "Blest be the tie that binds," and as they finished, Mr. Sunderland said, "Let us pray," and finally dismissed them with the benediction.

To you, girls, who are accustomed to this kind of work, it may not mean very much, this thing that Milly did. But there came a genuine revival to Clover Dale soon after this event, and many who came into the kingdom dated their first dawning desire, ever after, to that night when Milly led the meeting.

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE

HE came down the road, walking with a slow, halting step, as if an invisible weight were bound on his feet. His wife, looking from the window, was struck by his pallor. In a fleeting glimpse she saw, with eyes suddenly illuminated, that William was growing old. That haggard face, those stooping shoulders, that look of discouragement, were wholly unlike her blithe, cheery husband.

William Forbes did not, as usual, enter his house by the front door. He went round to the back, and stood at the head of the lane, looking down and waiting for the hired man, Silas Beam, who was driving home the cows. The little delay gave Mrs. Forbes her opportunity.

"Molly," she said, "not one word to your father tonight about your new suit."

"But, mother," remonstrated twenty-year-old Molly, who had set her mind on a lovely India silk with a blouse trimmed with lace and embroidery, and a jacket besides, "how can I go to Aunt Phebe's unless I get some new clothes? How can I, mother?"

"I don't know, dear. I only know you must not bother papa this evening. I mean it. Not a single hint, Molly. And you, Jack, don't ask your father for a cent."

"All right, mother," answered Jack, putting his Latin reader on the shelf and taking down his algebra.

Mr. Forbes came in. As his wife met him cheerfully, taking his hat from his hand, and drawing forward an easy chair, he smiled, but wanly. In twenty-five years of marriage, he had not failed to answer the challenge of her smile with his own responsive brightness. But latterly,

dearly as they loved one another, and complete as was their mutual comprehension, Ellen Forbes was aware that William was keeping something back from her; that he was not wholly at his ease, that there was a distress of some sort tugging at his tranquillity. She resolved to find out what it might be.

When dinner was over, the good plain dinner that was so appetizing and wholesome for a tired man, who daily carried a cold luncheon from home to the store, Molly and Jack went to the Christian Endeavor meeting, and their parents were left alone.

"Will," said Ellen suddenly, "what troubles you? Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing, except that when this month ends, I shall lose my job."

She caught her breath in surprise and dismay.

"Why, Will," she exclaimed, "you've been with Rice & Kildare since you were a lad."

"Yes, that is true."

"Of what do they complain? What have you done amiss?" The wife's tone was indignant. Her eyes snapped. She knew that her husband had served his employers faithfully, that he had not stinted any labor nor scamped any service.

"It is of what I cannot do that they complain, Nellie. Since old man Rice died, and Mr. Kildare senior retired, the younger men have come into power, with new methods. I am too slow for them. They want me to go on the road as I always have, two or three times a year, but they insist that I must travel on Sunday, and I have declined."

"Certainly you could not go back on your record, trample the Fourth Commandment under foot and travel on the Lord's day. You did perfectly right to stand up for your life-long convictions, and I'm proud of you. Never mind about securing another place. There's work enough right here on this bit of a garden and farm."

"I'm no farmer, Ellen."

"I am. I was raised on a farm. We'll let Silas go. He can find work without any trouble. We've a little saved, a little more, Will, than you know about, for I've always been putting by something for a rainy day. We'll all pull together, and I believe you'll find there's money in garden stuff and chickens and eggs. We're near enough a fine market. Why, William Forbes, the whole thing rises before my eyes, a vision of prosperity. I am thankful those young men don't want you, and thankful for the reason. There would be no blessing if you went against principle."

The young people came gaily in from their meeting to find their father and mother chatting as eagerly as if they were children planning for a picnic.

"You two are real lovers, aren't you?" said Molly, as she kissed them good-night.

"Lovers! why, yes," said her mother. "That's what makes our home so worth while. We are very happy, Molly, and we are going to be happier."

Molly did not get her dainty suit that season, but she looked like an opening rose in her old one nicely made over, and so thought young Louis Parke, who had long covertly admired her, but had feared to take on himself the responsibility of marrying a girl brought up in the great comfort and luxury which Mrs. Forbes, by good management, had always provided for her home. A chance remark of his sister's, that Molly Forbes had more economy about her than most girls, and knew how to wear a dress longer than any of her friends, decided Lewis, that a poor young man might venture to seek her for his life partner. And as Molly had liked him from school days, love was an easy step forward.

William Forbes tried a twelvemonth of amateur farming; but he was not a shining success in this. If his wife had not developed a remarkable talent for buying and sell-

ing, as well as raising produce, they would have lost all they invested. Here she proved herself an example of what a woman can do when she is allowed to enter an open door of opportunity. Yet the experiment was not all loss, for the outdoor life and exercise made a new man physically of Mr. Forbes, who had been shut in most of his mature years, except for outings, which involved absence from home, long railway rides, nights in Pullmans, and homesick tarrying in hotels.

One day Mr. Forbes received a letter. It was from a business house in town, and offered him a position superior to his former one, both in emolument and honor. At the end of the letter there was this sentence, "We want a Christian man, one who respects and keeps the Sabbath, as we do ourselves."

"I told you, William, the hand of Providence was in it, when you lost your old job, did I not?"

"Yes," he answered, "dearest wife, you did."

MY VISIT TO THE SHAKERS

THE beautiful mountains of Columbia County, N. Y., reach their fullest charm at Lebanon. All the valley is brimmed with beauty like a cup that cannot hold another drop. On Mount Lebanon stand a group of buildings—substantial, ample, dignified in their entire absence of pretension or ornament—and here reside, honored and beloved by their neighbors, the two or three families that remain of what was, years ago, a much more numerous community of Shakers. They own and cultivate a wide dominion, embowered in fruit trees, waving with corn, tilled with wisdom and industry. A celibate Order, the brethren and sisters share everything in common as the primitive Christians did, the government and administration of the several households being committed to elders and eldresses, men and women of great tact and discretion, who know how to exercise authority without petty interference with individual liberty, and whose character is a guarantee of their influence. To them, the members of the community resort, very much as children to a parent, asking permission to go or come, and referring to them all mooted points.

I wish the housekeepers who read this page could see the immaculate and sweet-scented cleanliness of the Shaker kitchen, and homes. Everything shines with such grace of absolute wholesome tidiness, that it is a rest of heart and eye to behold the floors and tables. The reposeful atmosphere is felt everywhere about the Shaker homes, so pure and clean, and so devoid of superfluous bric-a-brac and incumbering, dust-concealing draperies. Flowers, however, flourish in garden beds and borders, and bloom lavishly in

the windows, for the dear Shaker sisters have a love of the beautiful, and gratify it in cultivating vines and thrifty plants. The kitchens, and the cool, fragrant dairies, are replete with labor-saving contrivances and every modern convenience. There is a great deal of work to do, but the old adage, "Many hands make light work," finds verification here, for the labor is subdivided, and apportioned, and every one takes hold heartily and does whatever is the duty of the hour, I truly believe, as unto the Lord. The brethren undertake the outdoor work and the heaviest indoor tasks fall to them. The sisters do whatever belongs to woman's province, from preserving and pickling to plain sewing, from buttermaking and breadmaking to the most painstaking work of the laundry.

Shaker cloaks are made by a group of sisters under the direction of a lovely-looking sister, Emma Neal. These long hooded wraps, with their graceful folds, are made of the finest cloth, and the stitches set in them are fitting for the wardrobe of a queen. Many American queens know this and buy these garments, one bride of a year ago ordering four for her trousseau. They make particularly sumptuous carriage wraps for luxurious people. Besides these garments, these sisters, pledged to the austere life of celibacy, make the finest, daintiest clothing for the nurseries of women who know the joys of motherhood; make little socks for baby feet, and blankets for baby cribs, shawls, slumber shoes, rugs. A great variety of useful and ornamental articles are made by their deft fingers and sold for the benefit of the community.

These sisters receive and teach a limited number of pupils, to whom they give an excellent book education, instructing them at the same time in the practical accomplishments of the home-maker.

Among the women gathered here are some of liberal education, and of native gifts of a very high order. One sister has published a volume of felicitous verse. Another

has compiled a very useful book of brief biographies of famous men and women. A brother, who has spent his life since his eighth year on that lofty hill, who is now beyond three score and ten, spends much time in writing thoughtful and able treatises on the Shaker doctrines.

Eldress Anna, Sister Catharine, Sister Corinne, Brother Alonzo, Brother Timothy, you and the others are among the good people one likes to meet. The marvel is that you do not know how to grow old. Shaker sisters at eighty are vigorous women, with unwrinkled cheeks and bright eyes. Probably the regular and simple life, freed from excitement, competition and anxiety, has something to do with the freedom from sickness and the longevity of the Shakers.

A picturesque sect, they are not increasing. They are in odd contrast to the restless, hurrying, fiercely onrushing world of the twentieth century beyond their doors. They are a reverent community, worshiping God after their unique fashion, observing the Lord's Day with care, and passing hence when their earth-life ends, in the hope of the resurrection. M. E. S.

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As far back as the first half of the eighteenth century, the Shakers were known as a distinct religious body. They were accustomed to trace their origin to the Camisards of France (a sect which made its appearance in that country during the terrible oppressions towards the end of the seventeenth century). These Camisards were so called from the fact that they wore the *Camise,* or peasant's jacket. Many of them were put to the torture in 1702 and 1705, and died the death of martyrdom, while others found a refuge in England, and there propagated their doctrines and found many followers. In 1757 Ann Lee joined the Society, and became its head. It was about this time that these people adopted the name of Shakers. In 1774 Ann Lee and a number of her followers left England for the United States. Their first settlement was at Watervliet,

near Albany, N. Y. Mother Lee died in 1784, having already formed her little following into a model for Shaker organizations, and having also formulated her ideas of community of property. Elder James Whitaker succeeded her as head of the movement, and under his administration the first Shaker church was built in 1785. He died in 1787. In that year, Joseph Meachem, a convert of Mother Lee, assembled all the Shaker following and founded the present settlement in New Lebanon. In the five years following, ten other Shaker settlements were founded, viz.: At Watervliet, N. Y., Hancock, Tyringham, Harvard and Shirley, Mass.; Enfield, Conn.; Canterbury and Enfield, N. H.; and at Alfred and New Gloucester, Me. In 1805, six other settlements were established, all the communities together numbering probably between 6,000 and 8,000 souls.

In their religious belief, the Shakers hold that God gives to man four revelations, viz.: 1. Through the patriarchs by promise; 2. Through the law by Moses; 3. Through Christ's appearance in the flesh; 4. Through the second appearance, yet to come. They teach the immortality of the soul, the resurrection, celibacy (not imperative, but as desirable), and non-resistance and non-participation in any earthly government. They believe oral confession of sin necessary to receive power to overcome it; they practice healing through prayer and dieting; they regard themselves as under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. They decline to take oaths in court or elsewhere; they abhor compliment and exaggeration, and they abstain from all games of chance. Their peculiar methods of worship, their religious dances, their quaint and not unmusical singing, and their earnest exhortation to all to lead pure, spiritual lives, are probably too well known to need any extended description here.

Two brethren and two sisters compose the usual Shaker ministry in a parish, which may include from one to four societies. Members are divided into three classes: Novitiates,

juniors and seniors. The Novitiates are those who "accept the doctrines of the Society, but do not enter into temporal connection with it, remaining with their own families, and controlling their own property." The Juniors are "those who become members of the Society and unite with it in labor and worship, but who have not surrendered their property to the Society, or if so, only conditionally." The Seniors are "those who, after a satisfactory probation solemnly agree to consecrate themselves, their services, and their property to the Society, never to be redeemed."

In many things the Shakers set an example that might be profitably heeded by other religious bodies. They are kind, hospitable, charitable; they have reduced to practice the principles of a Christian commune; they esteem purity of character and a helpful life as greater than worldly riches and honors. As their name of "The Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing" implies, their hope and expectation are constantly and steadily fixed upon that event as the ultimate means of the redemption of a sinful world.

THE CROCUS BED

"LAST fall," said Beatrice Irving, looking wistfully out of the window, across the small back garden, where the snow still lay, a white blanket over the sodden ground, though winter was on the wane, "we planted bulbs in that bed near the fence. Isadore and I broke our backs over it, all one day, but we've had such a chilly winter, so much storm, and rain, and sleet, I'm afraid they will never come up."

"Why, sister!" interrupted Isadore in her cheerful chirrupy way, as she pinned my dress-stuff to the lining, and gave a pull here and a pat there, "why, sister, how you talk. Our flowers always came up, same as those of other folks."

"Oh! I don't know as they do," said Beatrice wearily, putting her hand against her side, and flushing a little. "Seems as if there never would be any luck again in this world for me. I'm clear down and discouraged, and I wish I was dead, I do!"

A big tear rolled down her cheek, but before it could fall on the white satin bridal gown she was stitching, Miss Isadore caught the sheeny fabric away, and held it at arm's length.

"Beatrice Irving," said my Aunt Lucy, who had been reading by the window, while Isadore fitted my new gown, "you are tuckered out completely, and that's all that ails you. Now, put on your shawl and bonnet, or stay, my niece will lend you her sealskin cloak, for it is very cool today, and you jump right into my sleigh, and I'll take you for a spin. Here, Emily," and Aunt Lucy, who was a prompt and peremptory little lady, turned to me, "you sit down and

toast your toes and read, or rest, till we get back. Beatrice must have an airing, and the world'll look brighter in her eyes."

When the two had gone, with a merry jingling of bells, and a farewell laugh from Aunt Lucy, Isadore turned her grateful face to me.

"That was good in your aunt," she said. "Not every lady would be so sweet and so thoughtful, I am worried on Bee's account, Miss Emily. She's sort o' pinning her faith to them crocuses." I may observe that Miss Isadore was not an educated woman, though "the salt of the earth," "and she thinks if they come up in the spring, Harry Jenks'll come back, and if they don't she's main sure she'll never see Harry in this life again. She's got it into her head, and she dreams about it nights, and you can see she's all run down. Workin' on Kitty Cameron's wedding gown's been the last straw, and she's near used up. I wish she had never seen Harry, that's what I wish."

"But my dear Isadore," I said, "you must not speak so of your sister's sweetheart. I have great faith in his honor. You know he was in my Sunday school class. I know Harry is to be trusted."

"Then why doesn't he write, and why didn't he send Bee even a Christmas card, or a valentine, and how is it, his own folks ain't heard a word from him in two or three months? No, I think in that great wicked town of New York, Harry's fallen in love with another girl."

"Well, Isadore, I don't, and I don't believe Beatrice has that idea either. But this notion of hers about the crocus bed is silly. Of course they'll come up, when the spring sunshine coaxes them into the light."

God does not send us strange flowers every year,
When the spring winds blow o'er the pleasant places,
The same dear things lift up the same sweet faces,

I quoted, and Isadore smiled.

"I'm going to New York next week," I said, after a

pause, "and I'll look Harry Jenkins up for Beatrice, and let her know all about it."

And then I said no more, for the bells were jingling gaily at the door, and presently her pallor changed to pink, and her eyes quite bright, in ran Beatrice, looking like a picture in my sealskin, and as sweet as a girl could be. The air and my sensible Aunt Lucy's conversation had helped her, and she took Kitty's wedding gown in hand again quite cheerfully.

We went our ways, and in the course of a fortnight I packed my trunk and came to New York. After a few days of visiting and sight-seeing, I bethought me of the lad who belonged to my home up country, and to the girl he had left behind him, and I took a seat one morning in a Columbus Avenue car and went whirling round the curves, and tearing round the corners, away and away till I found myself far downtown among tall warehouses and dingy edifices, quite different from the gala streets where fair ladies go shopping, and the windows are a wonder to see, with the rich stuffs and mingling colors and the jewels and laces, and everything splendid that money can buy.

Well, I discovered the place where Harry Jenkins had worked, and stepping into the elevator, I was borne up, up, up, a crazy height, and the elevator went at a dizzy rate, and I got to the room and asked for him.

"Hurt? you say he was hurt?" I asked of a grizzled and tired-looking elderly man who left a desk and came forward, seeing a bewildered young woman looking about her, in an unfamiliar spot.

"Yes, Harry Jenkins was hurt a week or two before Christmas; a cable car knocked him over, and he had concussion of the brain, and his knee is injured. You'll find him at the Presbyterian Hospital; he's doing well now, but he's had a close shave. Death and he ran a pretty near race of it for one while. Good-bye. Strange, nobody wrote to his people, but we didn't know them, and he's not

been in a condition to inquire, and anyhow, it was nobody's business."

I went flying to the hospital, and fortunately struck a visiting day. Was this Harry Jenkins, white-faced, shaven, thin, but with the honest brow, and the plucky mouth, and the candid eye I knew. Of course it was, and I cried over him, and gave him all the home news.

"Tell my mother I'm all right," said the brave fellow, "though she knows it now, for one of the nurses has written for me, and tell Bee Irving, please, that I'll be at home with her again when the crocus bed is in bloom; I'll be at home all summer; I won't be able to work in this city for ages.

"And, Miss Emily, I want you to know that I haven't worried. God's been good enough to let me see I needn't. He's bringing everything out right. He can do it somehow."

I wrote to Beatrice that evening. I did not preach to her, but I did preach to myself a little. For, who does not worry, wondering why this happens, and that is allowed; troubling his heart with doubts and fears. Often there seems good cause, but when you think of it, there never is, for the Lord's care is always over us, and even in times of accident, illness, poverty and danger, that care does not fail.

Harry Jenkins and the crocus bed together convinced Beatrice that she had been faithless in her fretting, and when later, the Hosfords came from the city and needed a gardener and chose Harry, and he and the little dressmaker were married and went to live in the lodge at the Hosford's gate, her last doubts vanished. For,

> It may not be my way,
> It may not be thy way;
> But yet in His own way
> The Lord will provide.

That hymn comes in pat in a good many tight places.

MISS JANE

AS I write the name, she comes back to me, over the many years which lie between us, my dear, gentle altogether charming friend, and the teacher of my early girlhood, Miss Jane. Here and there, the land over, and perhaps among my readers, there are women with gray hair, but young at heart still, who were once little girls, sitting with slates and books in the school, which was kept by three youthful sisters, Miss Anna, Miss Elizabeth, Miss Jane. We did not then know how young they were, for children have no standard by which to measure those older than themselves, and are very apt to fancy parents and teachers quite venerable, when the latter are simply in the youth of middle age.

That old-fashioned schoolhouse, white, with green blinds, stood on the bank of a river, with green fields all about, and a bridge in plain sight, over which foot passengers and wagons went intermittently through the day, while a belt of firs in the distance was like a darkly verdant wall. Our desks were ranged along the windows, and Miss Jane's was at one end of the room. She taught the smallest pupils, but gave lessons in penmanship and French to the older girls. I make my f's and my p's today as she taught me to do, and I never pick up my French Bible, nor read a French periodical or book, without remembering my lessons beside her chair.

But I am not talking of Miss Jane, because I loved her, and still love her, and look forward to meeting her by-and-by in the heaven where she has dwelt these long years, rather because among my Christian Herald readers, there are some to whom my picture of her may be suggestive and useful.

Some of you teach, and in your position hold a position of influence which angels might envy, so easily can you influence the minds of children, and so indelible are the impressions you make.

Once, confronted by a puzzling situation, and tempted to sin against my conscience, I wrote "Dear Miss Jane" a wee bit of a note, folding it in the shape of a cocked hat, and slipping it, as I entered school in the morning, into a small drawer in the side of her desk, a sacred repository to us girls, for was it not our postoffice? At recess a small messenger brought me Miss Jane's answer, a very brief reply, in her clear and beautifully legible hand, and this was the whole of it: "Dear M.—Don't you think this is safe, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God'?"

You see, how judicious and discreet was this leaving the decision to the higher test, the only test which, after all, it is worth our while to trust when we must settle upon one of two conflicting courses. Miss Jane always spoke of heaven as the highest court of appeals, from which no one could possibly differ, once having received the verdict.

As I recall her, she was dressed with the utmost daintiness, her dark hair parted and worn in smooth and shining bandeaux over her ears, for neither fluffy fringes, nor crimps, nor any of our latter day fussiness had obtained vogue in Miss Jane's girlhood. Her slender, white hands wore no rings, her collar was fastened by a gold brooch, and her white linen cuffs, with gold buttons. Everything about her was spotless, pure, exquisite, and we all felt called upon to imitate her, and be neat and delicately clean, and perfectly tidy ourselves. One year, red calicoes and cambrics with white aprons, finished by frills, were the fashion, and we must have looked like a field of poppies and daisies and red clovers in the sunshine, with our light hearts and happy faces.

I knew a teacher once whose work was in the slums, and

whose class was composed of street boys of the kind found in the foreign tenement-house neighborhoods. This teacher, like my Miss Jane, was a woman of great charm and beauty, and she heightened her beauty by dressing with great care, not richly, but with the most minute attention to every small detail. One morning she came to the breakfast table looking radiant, her black gown brightened by an extremely elegant bow of ribbon at the neck, and a buckle of silver fastening her belt. She had a silver comb in her hair, and announced that on her way to school she intended to buy a Jacqueminot rose to stick into her bosom.

"Why all these elaborate preparations," said somebody: "are you expecting a visit from some princess, or from your school committee; why are you gotten up with so much attention to effect, as if you are going to a party?"

"The fact is," said the lady, smiling, "my boys have been rather troublesome of late, and some of them have been playing truant. I must make them in love with my looks, and I have noticed that it pays to wear a pretty gown to school among these little fellows; they see so much that is not pretty and attractive in their homes."

Human nature is so much alike, no matter what the condition, that it is safe to apply Miss Jane's rule in every case, both to the higher and the lower classes. I use the adjectives for convenience merely. In our heavenly Father's sight, our poor distinctions of "higher" and "lower" do not stand for much. Under the velvet gown and under the homespun frock, hearts are much the same, and are reached by the same means.

Miss Jane exercised over her pupils always a pronounced religious, perhaps I would better say, a pronounced unworldly, influence. Not only unworldly but otherworldly she was in her ways and talks, and we felt that anything mean, small, petty, underhanded, was unworthy, and that we could not claim her friendship unless we lived up to high standards. To be with her, was to breathe a pure

atmosphere. Her life was keyed to the heavenly harmonies.

After a while we had a great trial. Miss Jane, our dear Miss Jane, was married. We could not readily forgive the man who had dared to court her, and carry her off to another town and state. But, in time, we were reconciled, and as we grew up and married in our turns, we sympathized in her gladness, and knew that the fullness of life's joy, its crown and consummation, came to Miss Jane when she stood at the altar, and in the most sacred hour that ever dawns for woman, became a good man's bride.

A SUNSET TALK

THE Doctor, the Minister, and the Man-Taking-a-Vacation were sitting in the porch after supper, and the Farmer who had just finished his evening chores came and joined them. Presently four ladies, their wives, very peaceful and sweet looking women, joined the group.

The Man-Taking-a-Vacation rose politely and stood still as a soldier in parade, until the ladies were seated. Then he resumed the conversation which had been begun before their appearance.

"Women certainly have the easier time in life," he said. "Look at me. I work fifty-one weeks in the year and have one for play. My wife came to this restful place in June and will stay till September. When she is at home, she has only the care of the house and of the children, which is nothing but a pleasure."

"I think, James," said the lady in question, "that you do not understand how much there is to do in a house nor what a deal of care children require. Would you change places, let me go to your office, and look after the work there? I will willingly make the trial if you will stay in the country, and see to Arthur, Louise, Freddie, Will, and Jack, till it is time for school to begin."

"That means," said the minister's wife, "that you will, Mr. Vacation, look after all the torn trousers, replace the missing buttons, mend the stockings which wear out at the knees, and see to the bathing, the combing, the brushing, and the behavior, the tempers and the morals of your brood. It is no light contract, fifty-two weeks in the year."

"That also means," said the doctor's wife, "that you will make Louise a new set of frocks and aprons, and conduct

the whole correspondence with the two grandmothers at a distance who wish to be kept posted as to what the children are doing."

"The question is, ladies, could Mrs. Vacation do her husband's work, even if he gave her the chance?" This was said by the minister.

The lady spoke hastily: "My husband's work is selling goods, not only to those who wish to buy, but to reluctant buyers. I am much more persuasive than he is, and I am sure I could do it," said the business man's wife.

"But," asked the doctor, "are you strong enough to stand it, madam?"

"Modestly speaking," replied the wife, "I am. I was a saleswoman before my marriage. Business life is very simple compared to the complex demands made by a home. Here I am a boarder and comparatively free. At home I do not keep help, though I have my washing and ironing done. Apart from that, I cook and sweep and make beds and dust and do all the sewing for our family, and so manage that my husband sees only results. I am often very tired, but it does not occur to me to complain."

"I must go and set my sponge for tomorrow's bread, or you will have no rolls for breakfast," said the wife of the farmer, who was the summer hostess.

"Well," said the gentle minister's wife in her pleasant way, "if men and women do their duty there need be no question of hard or easy. The proper thing it seems to me is to be contented with one's lot, and to try to lighten each other's burdens as best we may."

"The true philosophy that," said the doctor. "Friends, the mosquitoes are invading this corner. Let us go indoors."

A LITTLE JAUNT

"NOW, mother, here are your tickets, and you are to be quite comfy and not worry a single bit. All you have to do is to sit still in this seat till you get to Jericho, at six o'clock this evening, and there Eleanor will meet you. I wish I could have gone with you, dearest, but you know I can't leave John and the children."

"I'll try not to worry, Eunice; but it's a long way to go, and I've never been on the cars before."

"Well, you've only got to sit right still; your luncheon is in the basket, and you can look out the window and see the places flying by. The day will soon pass. I must run, now. Good-bye. The train will be off in a minute."

The young woman named Eunice kissed her mother and ran out of the car. Then she stood smiling on the platform until the train began to move slowly out of the yard. With a final wave of her hand, she walked away, as it pulled swiftly beyond her sight.

Mother was a dear old lady with "country" written all over her, from the plainly parted white hair under the simple black bonnet to the tips of her neatly shod feet. She was evidently one of those sweet, contented, stay-at-home women who do not need change of scene every few weeks, and who are very happy in the trivial round, the common task of home. Eleanor, her youngest daughter, had married and gone far away to live, and now, when Eleanor needed her, mother was going out into the strange world. Her sixty years had never known a more formidable and exciting experience than this little jaunt into the unfamiliar.

The lady opposite watched her, and being impressed

with the strength and sweetness of the serene old face, finally ventured to speak to her.

"Pardon me," she said, "but you and I are to be neighbors for a day, and I don't know why we should both sit as if we were dumb, when I'm sure we both enjoy talking."

"Indeed, I do love to talk," the old lady answered; "but Eunice gave me so many directions about not asking questions and only speaking to the conductor, that I didn't like to begin. You see, I've never been more than a few miles from home before, and always having horses, I've gone in my own conveyance when I went to Presbytery with father—he was an elder, you must know—or to weddings or funerals. Father died five years ago, and since then I've staid close by my fireside. Eunice wants me to live with her, and John Joseph wants me to come to him, and now Eleanor thinks I ought never to leave her, once I get there. But I'll stay till the baby comes, and she is about and real strong, and then, please God, I'll go home."

"You are wise," said the new friend, "to keep under your roof that you've been used to. It's more independent, and you can do as you choose there."

"Yes, I like my own old-fashioned housekeeping, and my Sally, who's been with me thirty years, knows my ways. Sally doesn't find fault if I scrub floors or wash blankets, but lets me do as I please, without a word. At John Joseph's they'd like me to be dressed up like Sunday every day in the week."

Here the old lady paused. Her friend saw that she was gazing with delight at the fields and woods they were passing, and noted that her face grew very bright when they reached the outskirts of a thriving town.

"So many, many houses," she said, "and oh! so many people. It fills me with awe, doesn't it?"

"You ought to see New York, and Paris, and Vienna, dear lady," said her friend.

"I reckon I can do without seeing them. I've read about them," was the answer. "Seems to me I wouldn't want to live in great big places like the world's big cities. Seems to me heaven itself'll be rather confusing to a person that's fond of quiet. When I get to thinking of the 'ten thousand times ten thousand,' as I do now and then, my brain reels."

"It doesn't need to reel. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for you, and for me, and in that fair land nobody will ever be homesick or confused. I'm sure of that for Jesus has told me so."

The friend had found a name dear to both. In great comfort they traveled the rest of the day. And at sunset, when they separated, the old lady was greeted with joyful exclamations by her daughter Eleanor, waiting for her at the upland station.

FAMILIAR TALKS

Familiar Talks

LONG COURTSHIPS

MR. JOSEPH ADDISON, in one of those exquisite essays enjoyed by readers of English classics, tells of the grief of the club on hearing the news that a member much beloved had passed away. Sir Roger De Coverley had been a knight of the olden time. He had been the idol of a country neighborhood, had loved his horse and his hounds, had served his God and his country, and a gallant, simple-hearted gentleman, had bravely fulfilled his duty till life's latest day.

Mr. Addison, quoting a letter purporting to come from Sir Roger's butler, quaintly remarks that as he has made his will on a very cold day, he left a thick frieze coat to every yeoman in the parish, and to their wives a warm cloth ridinghood. Old-fashioned pictures show these riding-hoods, which were finished with quilted capes, warm enough to be an offset to the coats bequeathed to the men. But it was not Sir Roger's thoughtfulness for his rural friends that impressed the reader of an old brown leather-bound volume the other day, so much as an allusion to the lady he had courted during forty years. To her he left an ample fortune, although she had never bestowed upon him her heart and hand.

Long engagements seldom turn out happily. Yet long courtships have been known to give great delight to the

faithful lovers who were contented thus to show their regard for one another. In a certain shire town in the South, for fifty years, once a week, at precisely the same hour, a courteous gentleman drew rein at the door of a beautiful woman. They were in the twenties when his worship of her began, and the frosts of time were thick upon their heads when he paid his last call. She died first, and he followed her to the grave in the character of chief mourner, and survived her less than a year. Every one in the county recognized the relation of these friends as confidential and intimate, every one knew that once a week they passed an hour or two together, and, years before the end, every one ceased to speculate as to why they did not marry, whether they ever would, and what changes would be made should the two faithful lovers become husband and wife. The secret of their determination not to marry was never disclosed, but they appeared to secure a reasonable amount of contentment from their polite and ceremonious courtship.

A similar instance was known to a wide circle in a Northern State. Near a university town resided a family of beautiful sisters, five in number. Four of the sisters married at an early age, one remained a spinster, and, throughout a long life, received the exclusive homage of a neighbor, who, like herself, appeared to prefer the independence of single blessedness. The gentleman was invariably the lady's escort at social functions, he dined with her once a week, and was always included among the guests when she had formal company or held receptions. His calls upon her were marked by the peculiarity that, summer and winter, they were made at five o'clock in the afternoon, and that it was his custom to take leave at exactly half-past six. The two appeared entirely contented in their friendly intercourse, they read the same books, knew the same people, had heard the same jests and the same anecdotes year after year, and were an agreeable and amicable pair of comrades. A delicate flavor of romance hung about their friendship,

and so long as they lived they seemed entirely satisfied to remain outside the pale of united family life. They did not seek to be husband and wife, they were merely ceremonious lovers who hesitated, for some reason, to go beyond the days of courtship.

One wonders sometimes, in cases like these, what came between the lovers and the final word. In a farming locality in western New York, there stands a little cottage quite by itself among fields and gardens. Roses clamber over it, and honeysuckle makes its veranda fragrant in the summer, and birds build their nests in the eaves. Here, living by herself, a little old lady, who was once a fair young girl, has spent the years of a tranquil and contented life. She once had a weary heartache, but it ceased to throb, and scarcely robbed her cheek of its bloom many years ago. For five years she had received the constant attentions of a suitor whom her parents liked and of whom she approved. She was twenty-two and he several years older when, without a word of explanation, he left the neighborhood and was not heard from for a long time. Some ten years passed before a report came back to the village of his marriage in California. The girl's parents died; she remained by herself. Fifty years after her lover's departure, she found, by accident, under a sliding panel in a desk, a piece of folded yellow paper that, in sheer perversity, had slipped itself out of sight. It was the letter in which he had asked her to be his wife, and to which, of course, she had not replied. So fate had intervened to prevent the married happiness that might have been hers. The moral is, that five years is much too long for courtship if anything permanent is to come after it.

Why should not every marriage continue to be in essentials a courtship? Why do lovers allow themselves to grow prosaic and suffer the commonplace to blot out the beautiful and attractive phases of life that belong to courting days? The girl who is expecting her lover, makes a special

toilet that she may look her loveliest when she receives his calls, and the man takes pains to be at his best when he enters her presence. Why should husbands ever omit the little attentions that before marriage they were wont to lavish on the ones they adored? A husband has not ceased to be his wife's faithful lover, and he ought to remember that the wife prizes compliments and courtesy just as she did when she was a sweetheart. Naturally, when people have common interests and common anxieties they grow close together and take their loyal affection for granted. Yet affection thrives on demonstration, and a little gift, an unexpected pleasure, a bit of a surprise now and then, make wedlock the happier. If every marriage could continue to be as full of respect and tenderness as if it were courtship still, there would be little heard about domestic infelicity.

WOMEN WHO LIVE IN DREAD

BROADLY speaking, nervous women may be divided into two classes—those who are really nervous, and those who imagine themselves to be so. Naturally, the second class is always in danger of drifting into the first, and very likely the woman who suffers from imaginary disturbances is more to be pitied than she whose maladies have an actual basis. The imaginative woman has nothing tangible on which to rest her ailments, but she nevertheless finds life a burden, and makes it so to other people. One has only to give the reins to a vivid imagination, and to be intensely self-centered, in order to fancy that she is a prey to every ill to which flesh is heir. To whichever class you belong, you will gain an immense victory over the trouble by eliminating the element of fear. To live in dread of some ill that may never materialize, to have the sense of a sword hanging over one's head suspended by a hair, to dread an epidemic, or poverty, or burglars, or a mouse in the closet, or a thunderstorm, and to let the dread get dominion over you, is to be worse off than you would be were you locked in a prison house.

Fear is largely under personal control in its beginnings, but if it secure an entrance into the mind, nothing is more difficult to rout. Where is the cure to be found for it? I think only in the words of our Lord himself: "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is, to give you a royal dominion over all things base, mean and lurking; over all furtive things, over all things that sap the strength and take the courage away.

Whoever has day by day a reinforcement of strength straight from heaven, whoever walks through this world hand-in-hand with the Elder Brother, will have royal dominion over fear; will, in truth, learn to fear nothing, except sin.

Another potent source of nervousness is worry. It has been well said that we may easily overcome the tendency to worry about ourselves and our own affairs, but that it is very nearly impossible to escape worry over our loved ones. Suppose, for example, that a dear one is hovering between life and death; suppose that a son or brother is in the toils of the tempter, or is harassed by contending circumstances; suppose a friend is to undergo a critical surgical operation; suppose a neighbor who has met with reverses and calamity stalks before his door, and you, being fond of him and his children, are loath to see misfortune overtake them; suppose any number of things that in the ordinary current of human life occur to people with whom humanity has relations. How shall one of us do our share toward the help and consolation of those we love, and, at the same time, have no worry?

The answer to this is very simple. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Cast there thy burden of care for the neighbor. There is One infinitely wise and loving, infinitely compassionate and infinitely resourceful, who can care for his children and bring them through every perilous pass. Of one thing be sure: Nobody was ever yet assisted to good purpose through the efforts of a worrying friend or relative. Worry eats into the tissues of the soul and unfits one either for clear thinking or decisive action. It is, besides, a prolific cause of nervous disease.

Still another hill against which to guard is undue excitement. An eminent nerve specialist not long ago said that he forbade his daughters to play any games or engage in any contests to which prizes were attached. He added

that among his patients were a great number of society women who had been broken in health by the excitement of card-playing. Women who engage, they fancy innocently, in card playing for charity, should make a note of this doctor's opinion. Many of us long ago came to the conclusion that there was risk of another kind, not to be ignored, in card-playing at all. But there are Christian people, unfortunately, who play progressive euchre and other games of the same sort that they may obtain money for hospitals or Fresh Air funds, and to them this word of warning is given.

Cheerful company tides one over many a nervous attack, but woe be to her whose friendly visitors regale her with stories of disaster, accident and sudden death in the circle of their acquaintance. Almost as much to be avoided are the friends who have long stories to tell of the illnesses they have had and the cures that were satisfactory in their case. It is a good plan not to talk about illness at all if it can be helped, not to dwell on one's own peculiar symptoms, and not to hear anything about what others have undergone. To put oneself in the care of a skillful physician, adhere to his advice, and obey his directions, is the wisest course. Having done this, trust with all your might in God, who works through means.

I may whisper to husbands, sons and daughters that, on their part, much gentleness, patience and tact are required in their dealings with those who are nervous. In nine cases out of ten, a little journey, the gratification of a wish that has been cherished, an agreeable surprise and the demonstration of real affection, will work wonders.

There are women in this land who have every earthly good except affection. Those around them indeed may love them, but they have fallen into the habit of repressing expressions of love, and denying the famishing soul that on which it could feed. There are too many husbands who take for granted the fact that their love is known to their

wives, as there are too many wives who are chary in the same manner of telling their husbands their love. When the dear one dies there are flowers for the casket and flowers for the grave; but looking back, the family may remember that there have been very few flowers put in the living hand, and very little sentiment allowed to brighten the life of the home.

WHEN LOVE GROWS COLD

THE young fancy that they, and they only, know anything about love. They scorn the notion that old people, their fathers, mothers, and grandparents, may have as deep and yearning a need, as anxious a desire to be loved, as ever had youth or maid in the radiant twenties. Of course they understand that family affection is an enduring thing, and that their elders cherish it; but you can hardly convince them that a man or woman of middle age can care at all for love, in their meaning of the word.

Yet, no hearts ache as old hearts do when love grows cold. Forty years ago, two persons stood together at God's altar and pledged one another life's long fealty. Till death us do part, was the solemn refrain that made an undertone, like the tolling of the bell in the midst of the merry marriage peal. Following the wedding day fast come the bright and buoyant years. The two had their day of small things; they shared poverty together. After a while they grew prosperous. The home was paid for. They ranked high in the community. Children had played about their door, and had been educated and trained for usefulness. In due time the sons and daughters were grown up, and some of them had married. It would seem that so much in common of sacrifice, of enjoyment, of accomplishment, of development, might have bound the husband and wife so firmly that nothing could cause them to drift apart. But one or the other by degrees becomes cold and indifferent. The wife is bored by caresses that she once valued. The husband ceases to pay little graceful attentions. Both draw into a shell of reserve, that is not hostility, but is worse, for it is triply thickened by apathy, *ennui*, and tedium. Life

in that home has ceased to be sweet and sacred, and has grown tawdry, meretricious, and unhallowed. The outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace is strangely lacking in that marriage.

Being self-respecting people, these unhappy ones do not take the world into their confidence. The husband does not pose as a victim, nor the wife as a martyr. They appear side by side in the pew. They entertain friends as formerly. But the intimates of the family, those who have eyes to see, the children of the house who love both parents loyally, are aware of the creeping foe that has stealthily invaded the domicile. They know that there is deepest reason for regret when love has grown cold.

One such grieving daughter wrote the other day, "What can I do? My heart aches for them both. Neither is to blame, but my parents wound and misunderstand one another every day of their lives." Another, a son, said not long ago, "When life is so short, and death may so suddenly end it, how can two people who began as my father and mother did, be so repellent and unloving? It decides me never to marry. I want no bitter disillusionment years hence."

Thank God, such homes are in the minority, homes where love has been frost-blighted. But there are some of them, and those who are responsible for the disaster should hasten to put self-esteem and vanity aside, and do what they can to coax love back to his throne.

THE STEALING ON OF AGE

AMONG the letters that came to me one day lately was a communication from a woman of fifty-three who bemoaned herself because she was growing old, and who declared that the young people around her were not backward in letting her know that she had passed her meridian. Everything about youth and age is relative. There are women who never were young even in their twenties; there are women who will never grow old should they live to be ninety. To fifteen, thirty is venerable. To thirty, sixty-five may represent old age.

Granting that there is no decay of mind or body, it is hard to say when youth ends and age begins; but fifty-three should be to a woman her glorious Indian summer of life. She ought then to have passed quite beyond the reefs and shoals that make the current difficult at an earlier period, and she should have so much genial experience, so much breadth of sympathy, such mellow tolerance for those who differ with her, such gracious kindliness and such queenly dignity that younger and older people should dearly love and gladly honor her. At fifty-three no woman can afford to be careless about her dress. She may be obliged to choose cheap material, but color and cut should be becoming. She ought not to wear frumpy hats, and she should be fastidious as to the finishings at her neck and wrists. Whether stout or thin, the season has arrived when she should take pains to adopt a style of dress suitable to her figure. More and more she should keep in touch with her world, reading the newspapers to know what is going on, and making the most of any talents or accomplishments that were hers in earlier life. The woman of fifty-three

should be a leader in church work, and a good friend to all the neighborhood.

Carlyle said, "Time wears slippers of list, and his tread is noiseless." When a woman really grows old, if she is in fair health and strength, she proves the truth of this assertion. Age does not storm at her; it steals softly onward so imperceptibly that she is often the last one to notice what is going on. If she is foolish, she may behave as did Mrs. Skewton in *Dombey and Son,* may dress girlishly, resort to every artifice of false hair and cosmetics, and may rob age of its real beauty by her pitiful attempts to continue childish and young. In the battle with Time, sooner or later everyone will be vanquished. It is wise to make Time a friend, to recognize his claims, and to meet him half way. To settle down too soon to armchair and footstool is as great a mistake as that of Mrs. Skewton. So far as one may, one should continue active, since early retirement may mean atrophy of one's powers.

In one of Augustus Hare's delightful biographical sketches, he mentions a visit to a country house where a Mrs. Duncan Stewart was expected. This lady was past four-score. In a large house-party every one was eagerly anticipating her arrival, and when she came she received an enthusiastic welcome from her hosts and their guests. She came in to dinner dressed in black velvet and lace. She had a word, a jest, a smile for every one. To her life was as full of interest as it had been when she was young, and the interest she felt in others kept her young and charming to her latest day. Some one asked her if she found the cup still sweet. "Yes," she answered, "sweet to the bottom of the cup."

THE ART OF GROWING OLD

WE may not all be growing old, but at least we are all growing older. Every day Time adds a little to the measure of our lives. Growing old should be growing lovely, growing sweet, growing rich, growing gracious and beautiful. No one should be so entirely attractive as the man or woman who has arrived at a summit in the years from whence the outlook to the Beyond is glorious and the retrospect is charming. Years filled with work well done should bring coronation to any life. Singularly, most of us fight against advancing age as if it were necessarily a foe, as if it came to defraud us of pleasure, rob us of privilege, and encumber us with infirmity. In "Rabbi Ben Ezra," Robert Browning struck a truer and deeper note:

> "Grow old along with me,
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life for which the first was made."

So far as age debars one from mingling in business or professional life, so far as it places one's name on the retired list and shuts one out of the engagements that have been the absorbing occupations of maturity, it may be deprecated. But there is no reason why age should do this, unless it is accompanied by some impairment of mental vigor or waste of physical energy. If mind and body continue at their best, experience counts as a valuable makeweight in the balance. Many people grow old too soon; their faculties become atrophied from disuse and are like rusty tools that have lost their sharpness. Very stupidly some of us give up active life too soon. Either we are lazy or indifferent, or lack the spur of ambition, and we con-

tentedly drop out, and leave the tasks that once we loved to the care of our juniors. Once in a while one meets an elderly woman who has had the good sense and rare judgment to resign nothing in which she has ever been proficient, but has kept up her music or painting or other accomplishments by daily practice, so that she is abreast of the times. The trouble with many old people is that they are not up-to-date; they belong to yesterday, not to this day. They are sitting in the chimney corner thinking over the past, when they ought to be eager and alive over current events.

The frantic effort made by a few women to look young after youth has departed, is so futile that it provokes a pitying smile. Not long ago, a lady knocked at the door of an acquaintance who had a room in a hotel with herself. After a moment's hesitation the door was opened a wee bit, as if reluctantly, but presently a voice said, "Oh, if it's you, come right in, and don't mind how I look." Horrified, the visitor saw that her friend's face was completely covered with something that resembled a masque. Strips of plaster covered brow, nose, cheeks and chin, leaving only eyes and mouth free. "What has happened to you?" was the very natural inquiry. "Nothing," was the reply. "I am only having the wrinkles removed from my face. When these appliances are taken off, I shall look twenty years younger."

"And will the cure be permanent?" was asked.

The answer was, "Not precisely permanent, but when they come back I can have them removed again. I hate wrinkles."

Undoubtedly wrinkles and crow's feet and deepening lines may not be agreeable to one who forgets that there is a beauty belonging to every season. Youth has its own peculiar and exquisite loveliness. Matronly middle-age is equally as beautiful in a different way, and real old age need not be dreaded as a disfigurement. There are, frankly,

old women in this land who are as beautiful in age as they were in youth, as, for instance, our queenly Julia Ward Howe.

An old face without lines lacks character. If the lines tell the story of a life spent in kindness and goodness and love to others, they are very dear to all who see them. Silver hair is far more beautiful in age than dyed tresses. An old face surmounted by artificial locks, or hair which has a sort of copper lustre, is grotesque instead of beautiful.

The great beautifier in every age is sincerity, and the twin sister of sincerity is sweetness of disposition. If you would remain young, do not be bitter or cynical. Be tolerant and tender and considerate. Take an interest in what is going on about you. Cultivate friendships, not merely with those of your own age but with younger people. No one can grow old who is in touch with youth. To be surrounded by the young, with their bright and ardent hopes, is to have an unfailing panacea for the maladies and ravages of time.

MARRYING FOR A HOME

YEARS ago it was a common thing to hear that a certain woman, usually a spinster of uncertain age, had married for a home. Her friends appeared to think the step on her part a wise one, and it did not occur to their minds that a home purchased by the surrender of individual freedom and on the basis of a business transaction might prove exceedingly disappointing and unhappy. An instance known to the writer is a case in point: A gentlewoman was left widowed with very small means. She was able to eke out a living by doing plain sewing for richer neighbors, and as she was skillful with her needle and industrious, she managed to support herself in comfort and independence. One day an old acquaintance called on her. In childhood, she had known him as a lad in a class several grades above her in the public school. He had been the son of well-to-do people, and she was aware that his means were large and that he owned a fine farm in good cultivation. Personally, he had never especially commended himself to her, as his manners were unpolished and his conversational powers were extremely limited. The man, like herself, had suffered bereavement, and was alone in his ample homestead. At his first call, he did not more than allude to old times; and on his second and his third, following one another in rapid succession, he sat uncomfortably silent, surveying her neat apartment and her dainty figure with a critical eye, that had in it something of the glance of one appraising values. When he called the fourth time, he bluntly asked her to marry him. She hesitated an instant, and then said: "You know, Benjamin, as well as I do, that I can never love any one again. All the love I had to give was given to John."

"I do not ask you for love," he replied. "I can promise you that I will be a faithful husband and I will give you a very comfortable home. You will not have to work for other people. You will be mistress of your own house and your own time, and we may be companions. At our age, we have left the folly of young people behind us. What is love anyway but a name!"

For this silent and taciturn man the speech was a long one. The woman's heart fought against yielding, but prudence and what she supposed to be common sense were on the side of her suitor. She was not very strong. Recently she had often been weary. She had wondered whether she could go on to old age earning her bread by the labor of her needle. Here seemed a way out. Perhaps it was a way indicated by Providence. Finally, she said yes, and it was arranged that she should be married in a few days.

With tears that blistered her cheeks as they fell, she put away in a little trunk the most precious mementoes of her married life, John's photograph, his letters, and the few trinkets he had given her, taking off at last the wedding-ring he had placed upon her finger. In the same trunk were the exquisite little garments she had fashioned for the babe that never drew breath on this earth. When she locked the little trunk and dropped its key into a compartment of her pocketbook, she felt that she had barred the door upon her old life. Indeed she had.

Benjamin took her to his home. To her dismay, she discovered before many days that she married a miser. His parsimonious economy took note of every morsel on the table, of every potato paring, of every grain of rice and sifting of flour. She had always been frugal, but she had never known the hateful pinch of sordid penury. As the wife of a rich man whose thrift had fathomed every descending scale of avarice and meanness, she found herself expected to perform menial tasks, including hard work, such as her hands had never known. Although the man

hired helpers for his field work, he would allow no domestic aid. The new wife was not long in arriving at the conclusion that her predecessor was to be envied the rest of the grave. Finally, her own excessive fatigue and misery ended in complete nervous collapse, and in this pitiable state she was found by a brother, who took her to his own home away from the iron régime of her surly husband. In this case, every word of which is truthful and told without exaggeration, marrying for a home had proved to be a most disastrous failure. Probably it is never anything else. Marriage is too solemn and too intimate a thing, too sacred before God, too enduring for humanity, to be made a matter of bargain and sale. Home is built only on enduring foundations when true love is its chief corner stone.

Fortunately spinsterhood has few terrors for women at present, and though the state of the widow is desolate, there are avenues in abundance outside of plain sewing, in which an efficient and capable woman may seek self-support. The ranks of the wage-earning women are so full, that at times it almost seems as though men were crowded out of some positions. No woman who has two hands and the ordinary mental discipline given by early training in school need fear defeat, if she enters the lists of the honorable and worthy bread-winners of her sex.

CONCERNING BORES

MISS CAROLINE is an excellent woman, the salt of the earth, but she is a bore.

Dr. Phillips is a great scholar, but take care that he does not pin you down in your seat like a beetle transfixed by a pin, while he talks to you about his special subject, which you do not understand in the least.

Mrs. Wilmerding is a devoted mother, but all her friends are worn out by her continual praise of her wonderfully gifted daughter and her woeful fears lest Edith, with her exquisite sensibility and fragile constitution, shall break down prematurely. An over-devoted mother is a bore.

These fragmentary expressions are sufficiently common to be familiar. Who does not know the admirable person, worthy of high esteem, who is a drag on the gaiety of a room, and whose ponderous observations descend like a Scotch mist on the sunshine of any company. The word bore is picturesque and defines itself. The sort of misery inflicted by a nail in one's shoe or a pin with the sharp end piercing the epidermis, is akin to the discomfort that flows from the talk of tiresome people, who go on and on as if unwinding a spool of invisible thread, while their victims are fidgeting to get away.

A witty person has said that a bore is a man who insists on talking about himself when you wish to talk about yourself. This is only partially true. The bore may not make himself his theme. Usually he has a hobby, and once astride of that, he does not know when to stop. It sometimes happens that a bore is a very brilliant conversationalist, but is given to monologue, and prefers to hold the floor to the exclusion of everybody else.

An amusing incident occurred one day years ago, in a street car, when a gentleman of wide information and remarkable powers of description launched forth on a tide of instructive talk to a group of friends who were his companions. He talked steadily without pause or interruption, while the car swiftly rolled over many street blocks. As his party and himself were leaving the car, the conductor respectfully detained him.

"Would you mind telling me, sir," he said, "who you are? For just an every-day man you know more than anybody I ever saw, and you talk exactly like a preacher."

The conductor had not found the talk to be a weariness.

This leads me to say that there are differences noticeable in society, and that good listeners, whatever be their social rank, are seldom bored by people who have anything to say that is worth hearing.

One who is vitally sympathetic, and who, so to speak, feels the pulse of his friend, will instantly cease and give the other a chance if the faintest look of vagueness or boredom crosses the friend's countenance. Nobody can be a bore who is unselfish. He or she who is self-centered, who can think and speak only on those aspects of things that appertain to the individual life, is in danger of boring acquaintances.

The well-meaning, but pompous talker, who indulges in platitudes, is solemn over trifles, or painfully facetious at the wrong moment, is a bore of the most pronounced type. It behooves us all to watch carefully, not the conduct of others, but that of ourselves in this particular line.

SECOND MARRIAGES

WHEN a widower marries again, as he is prone to do, after a decent interval, it is usually felt by his friends, that his desolate loneliness made companionship in the bereft home a necessity. If he has children, it is evident that he needs somebody to aid him in bringing them up. A widower with young children is much more helpless than a widow in the same condition. She can take in sewing or washing, if she is poor, and bring up her boys and girls in some sort of comfort and respectability, though often enough they have a hard row to hoe. He, being poor, cannot fend for himself and his bairns at home, cannot cook or make or mend for them, and as he has not the wherewithal to pay a housekeeper, he must needs marry and get one who will work for board and lodging. People in easy circumstances have not the excuse of poverty, and, it would seem, might remain longer than they do, faithful to the memory of the vanished hand and the sound of the voice that is still. But human nature starves on mere memories, and it is often those whose first marriages were most successful, having brought them a rich harvest of love and joy, who seek refuge from loss and pain in a second union.

To those who knew and loved the one who is gone, there is usually a sharp pang when cards come for the second wedding. There is the thought of the wife in her grave, of the husband who toiled so hard and died so soon. A jealous sense of the injury death did these, who fell so early in the crowded ways of the world, and who so swiftly have been forgotten, is as natural and as inevitable on the part of the observant outsiders, as the reaction from a far deeper grief has been on the part of those who remarry.

Life is too stern, too clamorous, too insistent in its demands, to allow any but exceptional souls to plod on alone, if they can form new and congenial ties.

It is not probable that anyone forgets wholly the past, or the comrade who made the past a delight, in beginning anew with some one else. The other scenes are over. *Finis* is written at the end of the other page. But in the back of the mind, ineffaceable, deeply graven, lingers, unobliterated, the image of the first love. A curtain is dropped over it; that is all. And a devotion as real, an enthusiasm as fresh and keen, may accompany the second love as glorified the first. The hearth is swept, the new fire is laid, the flames shall kindle again, and house and heart grow warm in the cheery glow. Though stepmothers are invariably suspected, and often scorned, with an injustice as old as the race, stepfathers are less harshly criticised, and are generally commended. A man can seldom have the chance to be unkind in little ways, and, to do him justice, he seldom wants to be less than generous in his adoption of a wife's family into his love and care. Many women are wonderfully gentle and self-denying stepmothers, but few get the credit their goodness deserves.

THE LOVE THAT LASTS

THOUGH every part of the swiftly moving year has its chime of marriage bells, yet October is the month most highly favored by brides, and the pomp of early autumn lends itself most graciously to the processional march that leads to the altar.

Notwithstanding the fact that easy divorce is the shame and disgrace of our country, happily and steadfastly, loyal marriages are the rule, and the exceptions only emphasize its well-nigh universal scope and reign. The wide land over, cheerful and loving home life prevails. Men go to their work in the morning and come home at night to the dear ones, and women and children dwell in peaceful security under roofs that are bulwarked by fidelity and affection. We need never fear for the stability of the republic while far from our congested towns, in rural neighborhoods, in little villages, in quiet farmsteads, husbands and wives live in mutual confidence and the security of reciprocal understanding, and a trust that admits neither suspicion nor doubt. Jealousy, which eats like corroding rust into the pure circlet of the wedding ring, is the foe of home happiness, but it is the exception, not the rule.

In the glow of the bridal hour, it never seems possible to either of the contracting parties that anything shall cast so much as a transient shadow on their felicity. Each honestly thinks the other perfect. Each tries to yield to the other, finding delight in small sacrifices, and anticipating every unspoken wish, with eager zest, each hastens to brim with some new surprise of gladness the other's cup of blessing.

From this high plane of exalted idealism, there is often

a decline to lower levels in the commonplaces of every-day existence. When the honeymoon is over, the bride and groom of necessity lay aside, half unconsciously, whatever of company manners they wore, and appear in their own proper characters. One may be sometimes unreasonable. The other may be irritable. Either may be occasionally hasty and say sharp words soon regretted. Now comes the testing time of the love that lasts.

Passion may wane. It is the mere efflorescence of true love that if it be of the right and noble kind, grows deeper with the years. Says Emerson, pithily,

> A ruddy drop of manly blood
> The surging sea outweighs;
> The world uncertain comes and goes,
> The lover rooted stays.

Old husbands and wives, by a thousand little threadlets of daily communion, a thousand unconsidered acts of imitation, grown more and more similar and more and more intimate, actually come to look alike. The same expression animates the two dear old faces, that in youth were in contrast of line, shape and color. The love that lasts transfigures and illumines our clay and makes it half divine.

Let the young people who shall be married in the coming autumn days, beware of the first quarrel.

> It is the little rift within the lute
> That by and by shall make the music mute.

No difference of opinion should cause friction. Two grown persons, brought up in opposite environments, may not always reach identical conclusions at once, but sensible married couples may now and then agree to differ. A good plan is never to let the day end in controversy. If there is need of pardon asked and granted, let it be done before night draws its curtain round the home. Where

there is never a first downright quarrel, with its sequence of heartache, there will never be a second.

Yet unbroken harmony may approximate stagnation. Where two love one another, the monotony of the days may be diversified by little contests of wit, and little passages at arms, which mean nothing but kindness, and add spice to the daily brew. The love that lasts is of sterling stuff. It does not go to pieces because the sea is not as smooth as a mill-pond. Given entire confidence, congenial tempers, a common creed, decent self-restraint on both sides, and a due degree of demonstration, the tenderness and beauty of marriage will weaken every gale. There are those who kill love by fault-finding, or freeze it by cold indifference, or stab it by infidelity. God pity them and forgive their folly! But God be praised, they are in the minority. The great majority drinks a cup that is honey-sweet, to the last drop in the end of life.

LETTERS AND LOVE-LETTERS

WHAT a curious thing is the imperishability of a letter. Years after the writer is dead and forgotten, a letter, yellow with age, its ink dim, its folds falling apart, may rise up as alive in sentiment, as merciless in reference to statement, as accurate as to facts as if its date had been written yesterday. Spotless reputations have ere now been smirched and stained by the unearthing of that most fatal among human documents, an ordinary letter. Light has been thrown upon state secrets and a cold blast of air scattered the dust of royal closets, all through the discovery of letters concealed for a century or two. It would seem almost as if the vitality of the never-dying soul, supreme and triumphant over the dying body, asserted itself and took its defiant stand in a letter, a thing scrawled by human fingers on so slight a stuff as parchment or paper.

Love letters have been found between the folds of books, letters which by some wretched mischance never reached their destination. Phyllis, poor maid, pined away or else married the wrong man, because Stephen's letter never reached her hand, and years pass, and another maiden of the family reads the quaint missive that meant so much and achieved so little.

Angry letters indited in moments of vehement indignation have separated chief friends. Resentful words, spoken, had made only a superficial wound, but written, they pierced with a stiletto's stabbing sharpness deep beneath the tissues of self love and they are never forgiven.

"Destroy my letters," wrote a brilliant woman to a lifelong correspondent. "Since E's memoir has been published and her intimate letters have been spread out for everybody

to read, I have taken fright. I don't want my letters put in a book after my decease."

By an odd coincidence, noted because the ink on this epistle was hardly dry, the recipient met a friend a few hours after who said casually, "You hear often from ——, do you not? Somebody should keep track of her letters. They will make a charming volume after she is gone!" The bulk of biographical literature is composed of letters, and it is interesting because the letters are unintentional revelations of those who wrote them, showing them as it were in undress, declaring their innermost feelings and exploiting their good sense or their folly. There is indeed something tragic about a letter, looked at as a document infused with at least earthly immortality.

Shall we have letters in heaven? Bunyan seems to have thought so, for in his all but divine dream, the post brought to Mr. Standfast, to Christian, and others the message summoning them to the Court of the King. And what is Revelation, that splendid succession of heavenly visions beheld by John the Beloved, but a succession of letters from the golden shore! If we need letters for our felicity there, where "the daylight is serene," be sure we shall have them.

Letters have a very singular individuality. By no chance, for instance, does a bill ever resemble any other letter. It probably arrives with other letters in the guise of friendliness, but it is more like a policeman in plain clothes than anything else one can think of. Demand on value received sticks out of it through the thickest envelope, and it lifts its front with a certain arrogant challenge, especially if the purse be low, and the debtor a spendthrift. One does not need to be a mind reader to know at a glance which letter comes from an old college chum, which from a long silent friend, and which from the grocer.

There are the letters with black edges, sadly indicative of sorrow. Grief has visited the home. Here is its badge. And this aristocratic square or oblong envelope, smooth,

creamy and complacent, is the mercury of bliss; it brings a wedding announcement. This dear little letter, in careful, well-shaped script, is a child's first effort, bless her precious heart and dimpled hands. Here is a husband's letter to the loving wife at home. Let us hope it is not signed "Aff. yours," but is expansive and caressing and full of comfort to the lonely heart. A son's weekly letter to the old people on the farm, a mother's letter to her boy in town, an evident business letter properly addressed on the typewriter, a letter to one in prison, to one on a deathbed, to or from one in a far country. Oh, the letters in the postman's bag, the mystery and romance and rippling laughter and muffled moan of agony, that are all crowded together in that heavy pack.

The moral of it is, if moral there be, take pains with your letter-writing. No idle business this, but serious and intense and worth doing with the very best you can.

THE GIRL WHO DOES NOT WANT TO MARRY

I AM sure, if I may judge from the reports of the past, that the girl who does not want to marry is a product of our own times. In bygone days, women hated and loathed the idea of a single life, and dreaded unspeakably the reproach of being styled old maids. It is on record in the Scripture, that in certain contingencies seven women would take hold of one man, crying, "Only let me be called by thy name," and certainly, though this is partly due to the conceit of men, the latter have often complained that they were pursued. A man once said to me, "I am most careful never to pay any marked attention to a girl. I do not wish to raise false hopes in her mind!" He was not a very attractive man, and I resented his remark on behalf of the girls in his social set. But this was several years ago.

The fact is, that there are many young women today who would be most reluctant to give up their independent life, their good salaries, and the comforts they enjoy in their agreeable occupations, for the sake of a husband, whose caprices they must endure, and whose clothing they must mend. They know little of domestic life, because they have gone straight from the schoolroom to the counter or the typewriter, and they have no fitness for managing a home. This they know.

I think it is the greatest of misfortunes that so large a class as the wage-earning young women of the land compose, should, with few exceptions, be ignorant of practical housewifery, but they are. In the times when women stayed at home, and were supported by fathers and brothers, as a

matter of course, they were anxious to have a home of their own, and a good man to labor for them, and they did then know how to bear their end of the load.

Another reason complicates the situation. With their far greater quickness and their power of easy adjustment, young women of the ordinary type who have been to grammar and high school are better educated and better mannered than the men who seek them as wives. The latter had to go to work very early, and have not had time to study the niceties which women like and acquire with ease. The young working girl, especially if she has read novels of romance in her hours of leisure, has dreams of a different and more polished husband from the honest and straightforward fellow who applies for her hand.

"I respect Mr. ——," said one such young woman, a stenographer of no mean ability; "he is a good man, and he is doing well, but I cannot bring myself to love him. His trousers are never properly creased, and he wears such horrid ties!"

The new attitude of young women to marriage inevitably provokes a similar indifference on the part of young men. Something is wrong, and should be set right, for the present prevalent cynicism in young and marriageable people is opposed to nature and reason.

The saving clause, so to speak, in the situation, is the fact that Mother Nature is, and from Eden onward, has been an inveterate match-maker. Young people, however prudent, however equal to their own support, do fall in love still, in the good old-fashioned way. And then, being in love, objections vanish; the lover is seen through a golden haze, the girl and the man each realize that here is the ideal they have always cherished in their secret hearts. They marry, and in the great majority of cases are happy ever after, as God meant wedded folk to be.

WHEN THE SHIP COMES IN

BLOWN hither by favoring winds, or battered by adverse gales, it makes little difference, if only the ship comes safe to land, bringing her passengers home, and depositing her cargo with its consignees. The important thing is not so much that the ship has had either rough weather or a smooth voyage, but that she has reached her destination. Always there are light hearts and glad voices when the ship returns. Often there are tears when she sails away, for partings are hard, and meetings are joyful. Long and dreary may be the nights of watching, but they are soon forgotten in the rosy dawn, when up the harbor sails are spread, her flag is flying, and the ship comes gallantly home.

Some of us have had ships at sea for a great while. They have tarried many days, many weeks, perhaps many years, and we've almost lost heart, thinking we shall never see them more. In the meantime, if discreet and thrifty, we have worked steadily on just as if we owned nothing in ships that were out of sight. The little craft that we manage close in shore must always be our main dependence. There is a good deal of peril, and waste, and the pain of hope deferred, in counting too much on our faraway ships. People of sanguine temperament are given to mortgaging the future, drawing recklessly on investments that are vanishing quantities, and spending with a lavish hand gold, that for all they know, may be lying at the bottom of the ocean. Until the ship has actually made its wharf, don't publish your balance sheet.

Some of the ships that start forth with fairest hopes are never seen again. Some drift into wrong courses, and

some are wrecked on stormy coasts. We cannot reckon very much on the ships that delay beyond their appointed time. To drop metaphor, it is the part of prudence to let each day tell for the best that it can, in work, in study, in aspiration, not sitting down and supinely waiting for some good fortune that is expected, but which may never be ours. For example, the man who takes a house bigger and more costly than he can afford, because he has the prospect of a large legacy from the estate of a kinsman, who may change his will a dozen times before he dies, is foolishly investing in a ship that may never come in. All sorts of complications and mortifications will be his portion while he is waiting for the good luck that may be, after all, a broken reed. A woman one day appeared at the house of a friend, arrayed in velvet and costly furs. The friend controlled her surprise at the magnificent raiment conspicuously out of character with the position of the wearer, but the latter airily explained: "We haven't very much ready money, but I have an account at several shops, and these things won't have to be paid for till the season is nearly over. By that time, John's ship will have come in. You know he is going to make a pile of money on that Western land of his."

The pile of money was not made. The ship did not come in, and a good deal of suffering was undergone by the couple who had so unwisely allowed themselves to become embarrassed, by buying what they could not afford.

A husband, proud of his wife's beauty, and hating to deny her any request, sometimes breaks down, and dies in the middle of his days, through carrying too much weight; the man is bowed under burdens he should never have borne, and worn out with the strain of corroding anxiety.

Other days there are when the ship comes in, days which have no such shadow of gloom. Deep is the gloom when the ship arrives too late, and everything is spent be-

fore it comes. It does not then bring very much satisfaction.

There are little ships that come to harbor bringing nothing but radiant gladness. The day when the baby is born is one such day of joy.

Some of the sweetest love poems that have been written when the baby's ship has come safe in, have sprung from the thankful hearts of fathers. Mothers have no monopoly of tenderness when babies are concerned. And men write as fondly as women of home and childhood and love.

Mr. George W. Cable wrote a lovely little verse called "The Last Arrival." If it happens that you have not read it, you will be sure to like it, as it is quoted for you here:

> There came to port last Sunday night,
> The queerest little craft;
> Without an inch of rigging on,
> I looked, and looked, and laughed!
> It seemed so curious that she
> Should cross the unknown water,
> And moor herself within my room,
> My daughter, oh, my daughter.

And George MacDonald, writing when the same sort of ship came in, said:

> Where did you come from, baby dear?
> Out of the everywhere into the here.
>
> Where did you get those eyes of blue?
> Out of the sky as I came through.
>
> Where did you get that little tear?
> I found it waiting when I got here.
>
> What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?
> I saw something better than any one knows.
>
> Where did you get those arms and hands?
> Love made itself into bonds and bands.

Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?
From the same box as the cherub's wings.

How did they all just come to be you?
God thought about me, and so I grew.

But how did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

Whenever a deserved recognition comes to a man or woman, in any sphere of service, it is in effect the coming in of a ship that has been waited for. The prizes of life earned by brave endeavor are white-winged ships that bring delight.

We are, by the way, of being much too serious and grave, in the conduct of our days, and we do not allow ourselves to be as merry as we ought. After childhood, very few of us in this strenuous time of ours, know how to play. We feel that we must always be tense, keyed up and ready for action. When our ships come in, do not let us be so sober that we cannot enjoy them. Every such arrival should give us a chance to have a household reunion, or a festival, or wholesome gaiety and mirth.

As we grow older, we especially need to remember that this is a good world to live in, full of good people who love us, and that our business here is to be happy ourselves, and make others happy. Away with the spirit of the pessimist, who sees no blue in the sky, because a shower is passing, who hears the sobbing of the wind, but not the joyous symphony of the breezes that float from shores of balm. Though there are losses, there are gains; though sorrow enters, joy stays longest, and it's a good world, whether our ships come in or not.

THE LARGE FAMILY OR THE SMALL?

"MAY I ask what advantage there is in raising a large family? I notice that many writers of distinction speak with admiration of a family of six children or more. Can the mother of average health and means get six children ready for church on Sunday morning, go herself, and call it a day of rest?"

When there are six children in the home they are not all babies together. The elder children may be so trained that they will help with the younger and do their share in getting themselves ready for church on Sunday, and in helping their mother through the week. Among the photographs that have given me most pleasure is one sent me from the State of Washington, which shows a very beautiful family group. Father and mother are in the prime of life, and their eight boys and girls are sturdy, healthy, fine looking young people, every one of whom has some share in the carrying on of the home. The mother's happiest time, though she does not always know it, is when her babies are not too far apart to enjoy one another, and when at night she may go from one bed to the next, tuck her darlings in, hear them say their prayers and say her own beside them, and give each a good-night kiss. The anxious time for mothers is not when they are little ones to be washed and dressed, made ready for school and church, and carefully trained in the way they should go with tender home discipline and plenty of love. Greater anxiety comes when they reach the reefs and shoals of young manhood and womanhood. The mother who asks the question as to the advantage of the larger family has two sweet children, the elder of whom is five years old. The chil-

dren are a great delight to her and their father. She does her own work, and being a farmer's wife, her hands are full from morning until night. A hired man, who works on the farm, is a member of the family. This mother does not see how she could care for more than two children without being worn out, tired and nervous. No outsider can determine the right and the wrong, the better and the worse, in this question of domestic concern. Parents desire earnestly to bestow upon their children the best available educational advantages. They wish to keep young with their children. Looking over the field of observation there is much to be said on both sides. The balance of testimony seems to be in favor of a larger family than the one most frequently found in an American home. Would it not be well to consider every child a gift from the Lord, and if he sends such a gift, accept it with gratitude?

When a woman, not over strong, does her own work, being much on her feet, receiving no help from the outside, she must be very systematic if she would not become a drudge. It is far less easy for the farmer's wife to secure help in her kitchen and housekeeping than for the farmer to secure a man to help him in the fields. Good husbands, recognizing this, are not averse to putting their shoulders to the wheel and letting their strong muscles relieve weary wives of at least a part of the housework.

ON LOSING FRIENDS

I AM not about to write of the loss of our friends by death. Friends who leave us for the world beyond are often as near us then as while they lingered here. We are often separated from them by absence and distance, so that the years glide by without our having opportunities to meet, and meanwhile youth gives place to age and the friendship exists only in name. A ballad called "Cousin Anne and Cousin Jane" set forth this situation vividly, and, though I read it a long time ago, I have never forgotten its story. Two little girls lived, one in Boston town and one down in Maine. They were cousins and they corresponded. They had been promised the pleasure of a visit, each to the other, when they were children, but it was not then convenient for their elders to give them the indulgence, and so it was put off until they should be young women. After that there were still insuperable obstacles in the line of march and Cousin Anne and Cousin Jane did not meet. Then both married, and presently settled into the numerous cares of their respective households. When at last the wish of a lifetime was carried out, Cousin Anne and Cousin Jane were white-haired grandmothers in their seventies. I doubt whether they would have been much farther apart during the meridian of their lives had one been in heaven and one on earth.

We do not lose our friends when they cease to be with us in this place of service. They have only gone to another sphere, and often they may be closer to us than we

imagine. Longfellow has said, "There is no death; what seems so is transition." Whittier in a beautiful lyric writes that

Death is but a covered way
That leadeth unto light,
Wherein no blinded child can stray
Beyond the Father's sight.

Gerald Massey sings:

In this dim world of clouding cares,
We rarely know, till wildered eyes
See white wings lessening up the skies,
The angels with us unawares.

My point is, if I can but make it clear, that those whom we call dead are more alive than we, and that we do not lose our dear ones when they are for a while out of our sight. We lose our friends while they are still with us, in mournful ways, in needless ways, by mistakes and misunderstandings and by wilful neglect. Sometimes we outgrow them. We started together and we seemed to have the same chance, but our life path was not unlike that of the men who set out in motor cars many months ago racing from New York across the continent, seeking through snow and ice, heat and drought, perils of every description in unknown lands, to reach their ultimate goal in the French capital. Life for some of us is about as hard and rough and full of peril and adventure as for the men who engineered those daring motor cars. Life for others is almost all on flowery beds of ease. It is quite as impossible for friends who are developed through a term of years by antagonistic experiences, to remain entirely the same in heart. We are said to change our identity physically at least every seven years. Our soul identity suffers change also, and friends outgrow one another. This is best illustrated in youth. Two little girls or two lads who are very

intimate when they play together and attend the same school, grow apart when in adolescence, one goes to college or abroad, and the other is early pushed into business, or stays at home in the same environment. This losing of friends belongs to the common task and the daily round, and is not a thing over which to waste sentiment. A sadder way of losing friends is when, through envy, jealousy, or any of the meaner motives that underlie life, two who have been congenial and have been mutually helpful are sundered.

> It is the little rift within the lute
> That by and by will make the music mute.

We lose our friends oftenest, perhaps, through plain laziness. We are like Martha, cumbered with service. We are busy in the household, busy with the children; worried, it may be, over the income; tired when night comes with the toil of the day. We ought to have dressed in the afternoon and gone out to make calls, but we could not get up the necessary courage, and so we deferred this agreeable duty until a more convenient season. There is a friend of whom you and I can think, who lives only at an hour's distance and to whom we owe a visit; but four seasons have slipped by, from snow-flakes to lilies, from bird songs to silence, and the visit has not been paid. Once we were ready to make it, but we thought we would wait for a new gown or a new pair of shoes. Again our plans were all completed, and the ceiling fell, and that necessitated a period of strenuous housekeeping. Which of us has not had the experience of suddenly realizing that a year or two or three may be stretching between the time when we last saw a friend to whom a short journey by rail or steamer would easily have carried us? This is all wrong, and it is a wretched way of losing friends.

If we want to keep our friends, we must be hospitable to them in thought, receive them in our homes, visit them from

time to time, write to them and answer their letters. Our friends should be in every station, of every age, in every part of our country and the globe. Life narrows perceptibly when we have few friendships and few interests. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Our Lord gave us a blessed assurance when he said, "I have called you friends."

A WELL-REGULATED HOUSEHOLD

A CORRESPONDENT has asked, "What constitutes a well-regulated household?" The question cannot be answered in a single sentence, and the theme admits of no arbitrary treatment. It opens a large field for thought, and admits of many shades of opinion, but is extremely interesting, and always timely. An ill-regulated, ill-assorted household, is a place from which to flee. A well-regulated household is a refuge, a sanctuary, a true home.

To be ideal, a household should consist of congenial inmates. The simplest, and ordinarily the happiest family circle, consists of father, mother, and children. If grandparents are added, the family may be happy and tranquil, and greatly benefited by the presence in it of serene old age. On the other hand, old people who are querulous, hard to please, and in the habit of interfering in the family discipline, bring in an unfortunate influence, a leaven of peevishness and complaint. Outsiders in the home, whether kindred or acquaintances somewhat complicate the problem.

It may be stated with reasonable certainty, that in any well-regulated household, there is an acknowledged head; without somebody at the helm, the ship veers about at the mercy of wind and weather. Indoors, this head is the wife and mother. She controls the housekeeping, governs the children, and is responsible for the quiet and comfort of the home. Outdoors, the head is the father, who dictates the family attitude to the community; who pays the

family bills, and who stands for the family in its relation to the world. If father and mother are united in love and reciprocal confidence, there will be no conflict or clash, and each will complement the other in the decorous and skilful home management, which alone is productive of good results.

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In the well-regulated household, the children yield prompt and amiable obedience to the wishes of their elders, and the young people, of an age to do as they deem best, defer from choice and from affection to those round them, not selfishly claiming their own way. Understand that there may be various ways of looking at most things, and that in non-essentials there may be the greatest liberty, but when the occasion calls for action, there must be unanimity in a well-regulated household.

Following out this line, an orderly household must have times and seasons, punctuality as to the home engagements, and, as a rule, method about meals. That is not a well-regulated home in which breakfast remains on the table for hours, because one or two members of the family are bent on prolonging their morning nap, irrespective of the household arrangements and convenience. Nor, is it much better where the man of the house, who might leave his office earlier if he would take the trouble, is habitually from thirty to forty-five minutes late to dinner at night. Punctuality is a corner stone in a well-regulated household.

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Then, too, there must be mutual forbearance. If there is an invalid in the family, who requires special care and consideration, different members of the home should relieve one another in caring for her. Old people should have their privileges, should be considered, should not be

treated brusquely or with impatience. A fine courtesy prevails in a well-regulated household. Good manners tide people over a good many rough places.

In the well-regulated home one does not hurt another's feelings. One does not tell a story to the mortification of another. The spirit of the home is embodied in the beautiful text: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ."

ABOUT HANDS AND FEET

"I REMEMBER in my early childhood," said the minister's wife, as she finished folding up the last package of garments for the missionary barrel, "seeing a lady who had been born without hands. She was a pretty, animated person, with black eyes and a clever tongue, and her people made a good deal of money out of her misfortune, as they carried her about for exhibition. Her feet, which I fancy she seldom used to walk upon, served her instead of hands. Very dexterously she could hold the pen or the scissors between her toes, and she not only wrote a very beautiful script, but cut out of paper many curious and pretty pictures, including profiles of her visitors in black paper. Poor woman! could any calamity be greater than never to have any hands to use?"

"Well," replied Aunt Betsy, looking whimsically at her own hands, roughened and knotted by the labors of many years, "I am not so sure. My hands have always had to toil so steadily, that I am doubtful whether I will be able to fold them when I get to heaven."

"Is it your idea, Aunt Betsy," said a young girl in the circle, "that in heaven people sit forever with their hands folded in utter idleness? That is not my thought of it at all. I believe we shall be as busy there as here, only we shall never have to do anything that we do not enjoy."

Aunt Betsy shook her gray head, "You are young, my child," she said, "and you have never known what it is to be all tuckered out. I shall rest if I can for at least a hundred years before I so much as touch a golden harp, or walk around among the angels, or do the least thing except get rested, when I am once safely home in my

Father's house. I often tell Reuben that things are queer, for he and I have had more than our share of hard work and hard knocks, and we both of us know what it is to be tired all to pieces."

"Now, Aunt Betsy," said the minister's wife, looking up cheerily, "you put down that sewing and sit right still in your chair, until I bring you a nice, hot cup of tea. You shall not do a blessed thing this whole afternoon, and we who are younger will wait on you hand and foot."

So Aunt Betsy had an afternoon of real peace. After she and the rest had gone home, the minister's wife and I sat down by the fire, in the twilight, for a bit of such chat as we used to have when we were girls together, and went to school half a lifetime ago. Instead of drifting into sentiment, we began to talk in a most practical fashion on the subject of hands and feet. The latter were ever pressing topics of interest in the parsonage, because there were six children, and they wore out shoes faster than the minister found it easy to provide new ones. The older children were reaching the age when they had ideas of their own about their dress.

"Cynthia," said the minister's wife, "is a good deal worried because I will not let her wear a tight shoe. Her feet, and her hands, too, are at the stage when they look a little large in proportion to the rest of her body, and she does not understand that they will not keep on growing, but will soon reach their fullest development, while she herself will stretch up and fill out, until she makes a fine, tall girl."

"You are very wise," I said, "to insist on a shoe for Cynthia, and for the others as well, that fits the foot comfortably, and is just a little bit longer than the child would prefer it to be. An infant's foot is the most beautiful thing in the world, but the foot of a young maiden, or a young man is seldom so perfect. People cram their feet from childhood, into shoes too tight for them, or force them

into footgear too short, with the result that corns and bunions produce untold misery. I knew a bride, who squeezed her feet on her wedding day into shoes so absurdly small that she never afterward was able to get them on. How she managed in the first instance was a marvel. I have seen women who were shocked at Chinese foot-binding, and thought it barbarous, yet they compressed their feet into boots which were so uncomfortable that they could not walk with grace, but merely hobbled about like cripples. Fashionable girls today are so silly as to put on slippers with high heels, set like pivots, almost in the middle of the sole, and the sum total of the whole wretched business is that hundreds of women go about enduring agonies worthy of the Inquisition. Whatever the children say, you, as their mother, are right in insisting that they shall wear shoes that fit comfortably and that are a trifle too long. Not loose shoes, though. They are as bad as tight ones."

"The shoes cost a small fortune," said the mother, wearily. "That is true enough," I said, "yet it is better to spend money on shoes than on almost any other part of children's dress. Growing boys and girls need stout, serviceable clothes, warranted to wear, but they do not require very many changes. There is no wit in elaboration of any kind on their garments. Cheap stuffs do well enough for them. Tell the dear home people who send you trunks full of things for your bonny flock, now and then, to give you money that you may be helped out on the shoe question, and say that you will gladly do without some of the other things they lavishly send."

I have been thinking about it since that day, and have reached the conclusion that the secret of appearing well dressed is to have hands and feet properly equipped. A nice glove and a nice shoe give a woman a well-dressed look, even if the rest of her attire be very plain. As for hands, they are servants of the body, just as feet are. From

the hour we begin to walk alone, hands and feet are servants of the brain, quickly obeying its behest. It is a sign that a little child has a good brain if it is naturally deft and sure in the use of its hands. A weak, shambling gait is most lamentable in man or woman and is a token of indecision of character.

Speaking of hands, the most beautiful hands in the world are those that most generously and ungrudgingly toil for others. Who does not love to remember the mother's hands, that in the old farmhouse were unremitting in their care, that made, and mended, and saved, and planned, that kneaded bread, and tucked the bedclothes around the children at night, and were always working, not for mother's self, but for mother's dear ones? Heaven bless the mother's hands that we remember.

I sometimes think that we are not quite fair to our feet. They carry us all our days. Longfellow's poem comes to mind.

> Oh little feet, that such long years,
> Must wander on through toil and tears.

Think of the laboring feet that go forth morning after morning to factories and shops; millions of feet treading the way to business in the morning, and joyfully treading it back to the home at night.

Think of the children's feet, pattering here and there through the house, little feet that make such music, as the children run to and fro, and think then of the slowly moving feet of old age, feet that must go more and more slowly until they cease any more to journey up and down the ways of the world.

Then, going back, let us be fair to our own faithful feet. Let us be content to stand upon them, and not to lean upon somebody else. Let us treat them as well as we can, dress them as comfortably as we can, and never suffer from them any torture which is of our own devising.

ESSENTIALS IN HOME LIFE

IN home life contentment is an essential to daily comfort. One discontented person in the house creates an atmosphere fatal to tranquillity. Cut the coat according to the cloth, live within the income, and have a margin. If there is no certain income, and a constant struggle with small means insufficient for the needs of the family must be waged, it may be in that case hard to be contented. Here the remedy is resignation. Let the tired and tempted one lean with all possible weight on the promises of God. We have the word of the Scriptures for it that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." When discouraged and overburdened repeat this little verse:

When obstacles and trials seem
  Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
  And leave the rest to Thee.

Or else be comforted with the sweet thought in another hymn:

I know not the way I am going,
  But well do I know my Guide.
With a childlike faith I take the hand
  Of the mighty Friend at my side.

Strive for contentment and never permit circumstances to crush you, deprive you of health and of good cheer. It is always better farther on. It's the long lane that has no turning. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." This means not only with the big world outside

the door, but with the little world within the home and the world of the individual soul.

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Another essential for success in home life is common sense. There are people endowed with every quality that is desirable except this. In consequence, they give wrong impressions of themselves and others. They blunder and make mistakes and get into false positions. The effect upon their daily life is disastrous. When the housekeeper omits salt from the food she is cooking, the addition of that condiment when the food is on the table is not entirely satisfactory. Salt should be added in the process of cooking. Common sense is like salt; it adds the right flavor. Also it shows people the true perspective.

Allied to common sense very closely is tact. This is sometimes confused with insincerity. The two qualities are not related to one another. Tact simply means touch, and the tactful person feels with others in quick sympathy, and is not apt to hurt a friend by saying or doing the wrong thing. We should be tactful in our management of children. The tactful mother never needlessly provokes an issue, and if she has the loving ingenuity with which she should be gifted, her little ones will obey her without conflict and fuss. Some mothers make one think of a builder who would leave the scaffolding in plain sight after completing the house. Their discipline is forever in evidence, and they are so fearful that their children will fail to do them credit that they are on the watch for misdemeanors, when, instead, they ought to be on the watch for good conduct deserving praise.

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A third and very important essential in successful home life is an even temper. If it be possible to teach a fiery thoroughbred to understand the meaning of the rein, it should be possible, too, for each of us to hold tempera-

ment in check, and subdue the tendency to anger and injustice. Ill tempered and aggressive wives and husbands, fathers and mothers, transform home into a penitential abode where nothing flourishes except ill weeds, and flowers do not thrive.

To drop metaphor and speak in literal terms, an essential of home happiness is amiability, and this should be diffused through the entire family. As for children, their tendency to quarrel and dispute, if it exists, should be firmly repressed.

There is an old church in New Jersey which, during the Revolutionary War, was the scene of a well-contested fight between the Americans and the British. The former were entrenched in the building and fired from the windows. The latter were well provided with weapons and made a stubborn offensive attack. At a certain crisis in the battle the guns of the besieged needed packing, and the parson, stanch soldier that he was in the church militant, led his people in tearing the leaves from the hymn-books, saying boldly, "Give 'em Watts, boys! Give 'em Watts!" In quite another sense, when Satan's skirmishers venture into the precincts of the nursery, the wise mother may give her children Watts, or perhaps not Isaac Watts, but Jane Taylor, who must have lived about the same period.

When the grandmothers were little children, they were not only taught their prayers, but were told to

Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 'tis their nature to;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For God hath made them so.
But, children, you should never let
Your angry passions rise;
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes.

WOMEN'S MANNERS

TIME was when we boasted proudly that the manners of American men, as observed in public places toward women, were perfect. A woman could go from coast to coast in this land, traveling in all sorts of conveyances, secure from insult or misunderstanding, and everywhere meeting with brotherly kindness and courtesy from strangers on the road. Latterly, as the country has vastly increased in population, and foreigners both high and low have modified what might be called Americanism, we have heard complaints that a change has come. In cities especially, where everything is in a rush, and crowds elbow each other, in frantic haste to keep engagements, men are no longer distinguished for gallantry.

Yet the fault is not wholly theirs. A good deal of blame lies at the door of women themselves. The manners of women in public places, it must be admitted with regret, are open to a good deal of criticism.

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Choose for investigation any local train plying between a large city and its several outlying suburbs, and making stops at intervals of a few minutes or a half hour. The hour may be late afternoon, when women are returning from shopping excursions in town, or from a matinee or reception. Behold my lady as she enters a car and selects a comfortable seat near the center. She establishes herself comfortably in the end, beside the window, rather near the middle. The left over space, intended for another passenger, she quietly fills with whatever little parcels or wraps she may have in hand. Presently the car fills with other people as tired and as encumbered with bags and

parcels as my lady herself, and these walk down the aisle with the air of interrogation and anxiety conspicuous in the outs when they are wistfully regarding the ins. Possession being nine points of the law, my lady surrounds herself with a penumbria of polite aloofness, is deaf and blind to their presence and utterly indifferent to their need of seats. There is one beside her which she could easily surrender to another passenger, and to which she has not the shadow of a claim. Her ticket pays for a single seat; but she looks as if she is expecting a friend or a husband for whom she is reserving a place, and the casual passer-by accepts this as a conclusion and asks no question. Along comes Mr. Insistent or Mrs. Fairplay, a person of experience and determination, who has encountered my lady before. A gentle inquiry is made, "Is this seat taken?" Whereupon, with a haughty glance, a manner most ungracious and an evident hostility, madame removes her bundles and reluctantly makes room for the newcomer.

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The little scene is familiar. None the less it illustrates the selfishness and lack of good manners which are peculiar to a large class of well dressed, well educated and prosperous American women. One would expect them to know and to do better. Take another example. A woman boards a street car which is nearly full, seeing a place where she may crowd in, she plumps herself calmly down on the chiffons of her next neighbor without so much as the slightest apology. "Will you not move a little, you are sitting on my gown," one day entreated the gentlest of women of such a heedless dame, large of bulk and heavy of avoirdupois. No reply. The request was modestly repeated, still no reply. A stony stare into space was the only rejoinder. Even a worm will turn, and the most timid of women becomes brave when it is a question of saving her best gown from destruction. "Conductor," said the one aggrieved, "will you please ask this lady to release

my dress?" If there is one thing more than another that a conductor, in common with other men, very much dislikes to do, it is to interfere in a matter of privilege between women.

The conductor blushed and looked deprecatingly at the complainant, but her eyes met his with firmness and her cheek was flushed. He looked at the other woman sitting in her majesty, an impersonation of disdain. Very respectfully he addressed her. Her face in turn crimsoned with anger, and jumping up she shouted, "Stop the car!" out of which she flounced, an image of outraged propriety. The fact is, that people who are habitually rude and habitually self-centered always feel that they are in the right and others in the wrong, no matter how boorish their actions may be. I have seen a woman step into a street car, positively glare at everyone already installed, and I have heard her imperiously order people to move up when there was not an inch in which they could move. Women constantly accept seats proffered them by the courtesy of men, without so much as a brief nod of acknowledgment or a single word of thanks. They do this when full aware that they will reach their destination in a very few minutes, while the man who rises to let them sit may be many miles from home. Arrived at their corner, they do not take the trouble, as they might, to restore his seat to their benefactor, but slip out without a thought of him, while somebody else pounces upon his place. This is one reason among others why men have learned to screen themselves with a newspaper while women stand. If it is becoming a rule, that nobody except elderly gentlemen of the old school and very young men rise to give women seats in cars, the bad manners of women themselves probably account for it.

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Another thoughtless act, amounting to an excessive discourtesy, is frequently due to the fact that a woman forgets how long it takes to make change. It is the train or

boat, and to lose it means for the passenger in a hurry a tedious delay. He may have to wait an hour for another train, but my lady who blocks the narrow thoroughfare as she stops to buy a ticket, extracts a five-dollar bill from her pocketbook, and carefully counts her change while a long line of impatient men and women fume at her back, has not the faintest conception of the annoyance and anxiety she is causing. Not a soul on the planet, except a civilized woman, ever does so shockingly rude a thing; but women do it every day of every week in the year.

Were a censorship in manners instituted, the good women who have a way of talking over their private affairs, the peccadillos of their husbands and the foibles of their friends, in public places, freely mentioning names, would certainly come in for demerits. So, too, would women who have the want of taste to wear long trained gowns in a crowd, feeling cross and showing it when people inadvertently step on and tear them. What else could be expected? If one deliberately allows the rich stuff of a gown meant for indoor or carriage wear, to trail on the street where people are hurriedly walking, she has no cause of complaint, if someone treads on and ruins her finery. All that is left to her is to be gracious in accepting an apology.

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The woman whose murderous hat pins threaten the eyes of her neighbors, and whose suitcase, set down in the aisle, comes very near breaking the legs of the unwary, must also be convicted in any court of inquiry, of a regrettable lack of good breeding.

Be it noted that the essence of good breeding on which all conventionalities rest, is love for the neighbor; kindness is the corner stone of courtesy. The truly polite person is a person easy to live with, in public as at home, and never forgetting the little acts of consideration which are obligatory on the road.

Our best society ought to exemplify our best manners, but women trained in its usages do not hesitate to stare superciliously at others, and at times to show a singular disregard for the feelings of those they meet. At a great exposition, several years ago, on the day devoted to a certain great State, the women most conspicuous for their loudness, their contempt for the comfort of their neighbors, and their ingratitude for civilities tendered, were women from the most exclusive set of the most cosmopolitan city of this continent. Obviously, the manners of some American women need to be mended.

LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE

THE little things of life play a very important part in the history of most women. Few of us are permitted to have a share in the great, widely known movements of our day. No woman has the chance to rival a great captain or admiral. She does not plan campaigns or command ships; her sphere is rather within the doors of her home, and there she is potential and strong, and her influence will be felt throughout immortality. Sometimes these little pin pricks of daily care hurt and wound like stabs; sometimes the fret of the daily routine wears a woman's patience out, and she breaks down and has nervous prostration. Even such an ever-recurring operation as the washing of the dishes three times a day has been the final straw which made a housekeeper's burden too heavy. The never-ending, still-beginning task of preparing food, serving it and clearing it away is enough to tire out the woman who does her own work, unless she has a good husband and considerate children who are ready to give her their aid. I do not think it beneath any good man's dignity to lighten the load of his wife's housework by bending his own muscles to the task now and then, while surely boys and girls alike should regard it as a real privilege to help mother.

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You have all heard of the lady who rather boasted that she enjoyed poor health, as though invalidism were a thing to be proud of, and also, a thing out of which pleasure might be extracted. Some of us drift into a morbid state in which we do seem to wrest a little complacency out of our disordered nerves, our rebellious stomachs, and our aching heads. The ideal condition for us all, is health, not

illness, and as nearly as we can approximate perfection in our bodily condition, we reach the standard our Maker set for us when he sent us into the world. So far as we can discern our blessed Lord when he tarried here had a physical frame exempt from illness; he was weary, but not sick, when he sat by Jacob's well. We, too, must sometimes be very tired; we need seldom, if we observe God's laws, be laid aside by sickness. A physician was the other day called in to attend a sick patient who thought she was threatened with nervous prostration. His advice was that she should dismiss her second servant and do all her upstairs work herself, sweeping, dusting, bedmaking, care of the parlor, etc. Practically this is what nine-tenths of our American matrons personally attend to, but madame was much offended. "You would turn me into a servant?" she said, with an air of resentment. "No," said the doctor, "in three months I would turn you into a well woman. You are suffering from lack of exercise and of interesting occupation. You would be the better for having to do more daily work. You would eat more and sleep better, and think less about yourself."

The obligation of health should so press upon us that we shall avoid unhygienic living, eat nutritious food, and give fine, rich, fried viands a wide berth. The gridiron is superior to the frying pan when the question is one of digestion of well-cooked food.

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Until Chlorinda happened to mention that she was afraid of night air, and only kept her bedroom window a tiny bit ajar, I supposed that everybody had given up that old fright about air hurting one after sundown. There is no other air to breathe at night, and if we do not have our rooms freshened by the current from outside, we must inhale a tainted atmosphere, heavy with our own exhalation. Do not be afraid of night air, and plenty of it, friends. If we could sleep out of doors, we should probably be stronger and less liable to disease.

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